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THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

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THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

*A detailed Account of Works in the
Permanent Repertory with Critical Notes*

By

CYRIL W. BEAUMONT

C. W. BEAUMONT · LONDON
75 CHARING CROSS ROAD

*First published 1946
Revised and enlarged February 1947*

To
*Those of my Friends
Past or Present Members
of the
Sadler's Wells Ballet*

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PREFACE

THIS book is an account of the principal productions of the Sadler's Wells Ballet, works which have passed into the permanent repertory, including compositions which, if not actually being presented at the time of publication of this book, are likely to be restored to active performance in the near future. There is, however, one ballet, Ashton's *A Wedding Bouquet*, which I have never seen, and which I have, therefore, been obliged to omit.

So much has been written about the leading dancers and the soloists of the company, and their appearance in numerous roles has been so frequently recorded in published collections of camera studies, that here I have concentrated on descriptions of the ballets themselves, to each of which I have appended a short historical or critical commentary. Moreover, since there are three different casts to some ballets, it would be a considerable, not to say invidious, task to attempt to differentiate between so many interpreters. Where I offer criticisms on details of production or the interpretation of a role, my observations are based on what I saw at the time of my visit.

The account of *The Gods go a-Begging* is taken verbatim from the original synopsis, which seems to me to explain fully the theme of the sequence of the dances. The descriptions of the Fokine ballets have been adapted from my accounts of them as presented by the Diaghilev Company, as is also the case with the account of *The Sleeping Beauty*. The story of *Apparitions* and my commentary on the choreographic design of *Les Sylphides* are reproduced from my book, *The Complete Book of Ballets*, for which courtesy I am indebted to my publishers, Messrs. Putnam & Co. Apart from the instances mentioned, all the other ballets have been newly described from notes made during visits to the Sadler's Wells Ballet over the last few years.

Finally, I have to thank my friend, Mr. Lionel Bradley, for the loan of several photographs from his fine collection and for reading the proofs, and Messrs. B. T. Batsford for their courtesy in permitting me to reproduce two photographs from their publication, *Robert Helpmann*.

I am also indebted to several members of the Sadler's Wells Ballet for their kindness in checking over for me some details of my description.

C. W. B.

THE PRE-FOKINE BALLET

LE LAC DES CYGNES

Ballet in 4 Acts.

Book: V. P. Begitchev and Geltser.

Music: P. I. Tchaikovsky.

Scenery and costumes: Leslie Hurry.

Choreography: Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov, reproduced by Nicholas Sergeyev.

First revived with present setting¹ by "Wells" Co., New Theatre, London, September 7th, 1943.

CHARACTERS

Prince Siegfried	.	.	Robert Helpmann				
The Princess Mother	.	.	Joy Newton				
Wolfgang (Tutor to the Prince)	.	.	Ray Powell				
Benno (the Prince's Friend)	.	.	Leslie Edwards				
Odette (the Swan Queen)	.	.	Margot Fonteyn				
A Peasant Girl	.	.	Jill Gregory				
Cygnets	.	.	<table><tbody><tr><td>Joan Sheldon²</td></tr><tr><td>Jill Gregory</td></tr><tr><td>Pauline Clayden</td></tr><tr><td>Elizabeth Kennedy</td></tr></tbody></table>	Joan Sheldon ²	Jill Gregory	Pauline Clayden	Elizabeth Kennedy
Joan Sheldon ²							
Jill Gregory							
Pauline Clayden							
Elizabeth Kennedy							
Two Swans	.	.	<table><tbody><tr><td>Celia Franca</td></tr><tr><td>Palma Nye</td></tr></tbody></table>	Celia Franca	Palma Nye		
Celia Franca							
Palma Nye							

¹ This ballet was first revived by the "Wells" Company at the Sadler's Wells Theatre, London, on November 20th, 1934, with scenery and costumes by Hugh Stevenson. The principal roles of Odette-Odile and Prince Siegfried were then taken by Alicia Markova and Robert Helpmann respectively.

² Formerly Joan Phillips.

THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

Von Rothbart (an evil Magician)	Nigel Desmond
Odile (his Daughter)	Margot Fonteyn
Court Ladies	Elizabeth Kennedy, Lorna Mossford, Mavis Jackson, Moyra Fraser, Moira Shearer, Paula Dunning
Pas de Trois	Alexis Rassine Margaret Dale Joan Sheldon
Spanish Dance	Celia Franca Palma Nye
Csardas	Peggy van Praagh June Vincent Gordon Hamilton Ray Powell
Mazurka	Wenda Horsburgh, Julia Farron, Jill Gregory, Jean Bedells, Franklin White, Anthony Burke, Leslie Edwards, Philip Chatfield
Swans, Huntsmen, Attendants on Princess, Pages, etc.	

Act I. The garden of Prince Siegfried's castle.

The wings are formed by groups of thick gnarled brownish-green tree-trunks, whose leafy branches intertwine to form a natural archway. To the spectator's left is a slender garden temple and just beyond it a sloping mound where bloom a profusion of fantastic plants and flowers. To the right is a gothic gateway formed of stone. In the far distance, standing out in sharp relief against a sunlit sky, is a double file of poplars ascending towards two slender towers rising from Siegfried's castle. In the right foreground is a small table set with flagons of wine and silver cups.

On the day when this story begins, Prince Siegfried has attained his twenty-first birthday, and the young nobles who are his companions have planned festivities in honour of the

THE PRE-FOKINE BALLET

occasion, aided by Benno, the Prince's bosom friend. At the rise of the curtain we see the youths assembled in the garden. Soon, they are joined by the Prince's tutor, a bespectacled old man in black gown, green velvet jerkin, and green hose. His appearance provokes good-humoured banter, for his rubicund visage suggests that his studies are concerned with wine rather than with books.

Enter the Prince himself, a romantic-looking young man in white hose, dark blue doublet, and feathered cap. While congratulations are being offered to the Prince and courteously acknowledged, the tutor edges towards the table, unable to resist those gleaming, tempting flagons.

Now the garden begins to fill with a number of peasant girls in gaily coloured dresses, who present a succession of lively dances for the Prince's entertainment. Just as the dances come to an end, the Princess Mother arrives, attended by her ladies. Siegfried greets her with filial respect, which she acknowledges with a certain hauteur, and for a few moments they engage in earnest conversation. It is clear, however, from Siegfried's expression, that the subject-matter is not to his taste. Indeed, the Princess has not only upbraided her son for the company he keeps, but has reminded him that now he has come of age, he must turn his mind to serious things and be prepared at to-morrow's Court Ball to choose a wife and begin to devote himself to affairs of state. On this note of stern reproof she takes her departure, followed by her ladies.

Benno goes to the Prince, tenders his sympathy, and proffers him a cup of wine to dispel his melancholy thoughts. A new diversion is provided by the tutor, who, having taken too much wine, has become quarrelsome. He loudly voices his disapproval of the peasants' dances, declaring them to be poorly rendered. When he is asked to demonstrate how they should be done, he beckons to one of the village girls to partner him, and launches clumsily into an old-fashioned measure at the end of which he loses his balance, his fall provoking general laughter. The disgruntled tutor is tactfully escorted

THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

to a group of friends, who dispel his chagrin with many clappings on the back. Meanwhile, his former partner improvises a dance which evokes warm applause.

The Prince seats himself and, obsessed with the thought of the approaching marriage of convenience, which he abhors, gloomily watches with Benno at his side, while his companions each seize a peasant girl for partner and foot it merrily. At last the festivities come to an end and the villagers take their departure. The light begins to fade.

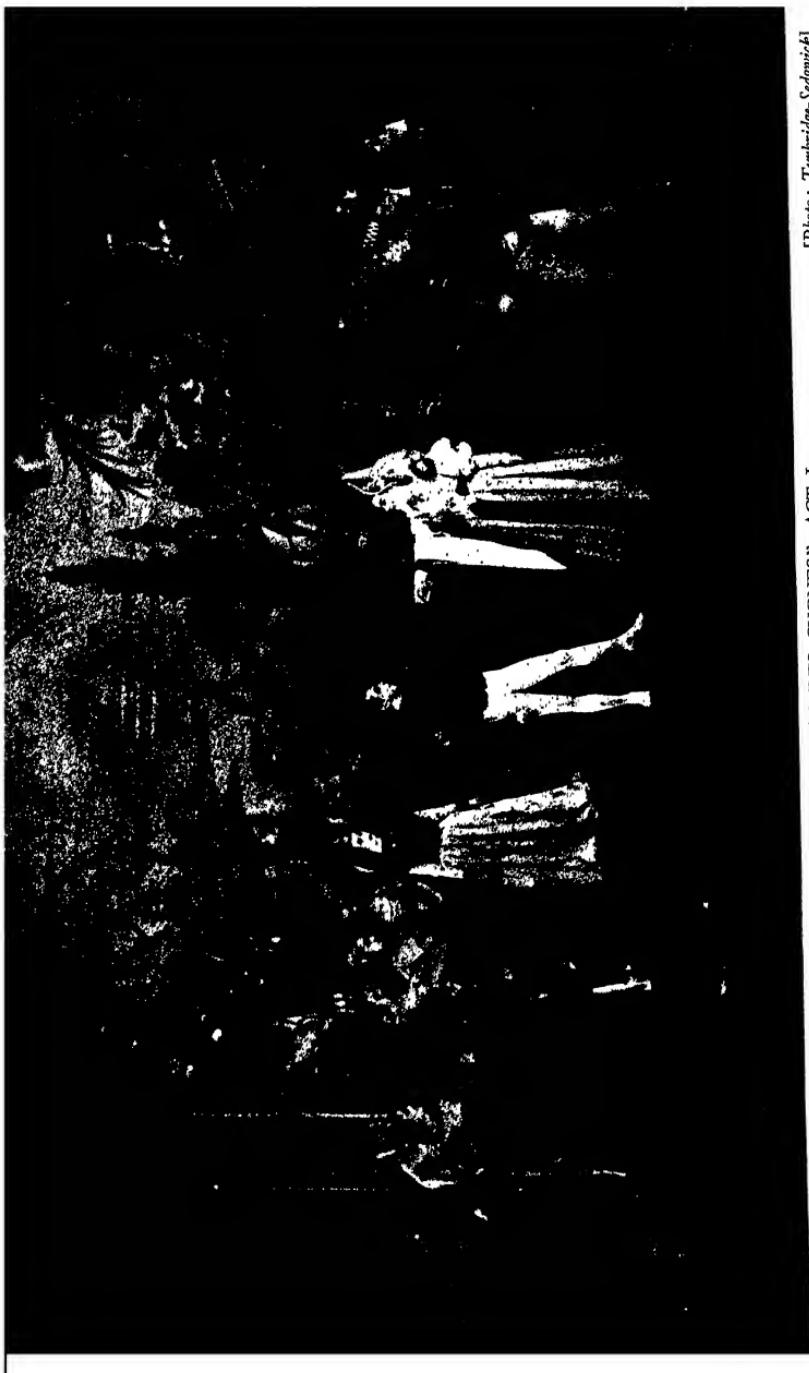
After the recent revelry the glade seems strangely silent. All at once the stillness is broken by a faint haunting melody followed by the rhythmic beat of distant wings in motion. The Prince glances upwards and sees a flight of swans passing high overhead. He decides to seek solace in the chase and, springing to his feet, directs the company to assemble at the lakeside. Turning to the tutor he invites Wolfgang to accompany him. But the tutor begs to be excused, saying that he would prefer to retire to bed, whereupon he clasps a flagon of wine to his breast and walks away in the direction of the palace. The Prince signs to Benno to go with him. As they walk from sight, Siegfried raises his arm and points out to his companion the receding flight of swans.

Act II. The lake-side.

The scene is very dark, the colour ranging from violet to deep indigo. In the distance can be seen the viscous surface of the lake, faintly illumined by a shaft of moonlight. Above the water there seems to hover the vague outline of the head and wings of a spectral swan.

A huntsman enters the glade and halloes to his friends. From both sides of the woods come hurrying little groups of eager huntsmen armed with crossbows. Last of all arrives the Prince and Benno. The latter, observing a line of swans in downward flight,¹ points them out to the Prince. Siegfried, desiring to be alone with his troubled thoughts, commands

¹ In this production the swans are not seen by the audience.

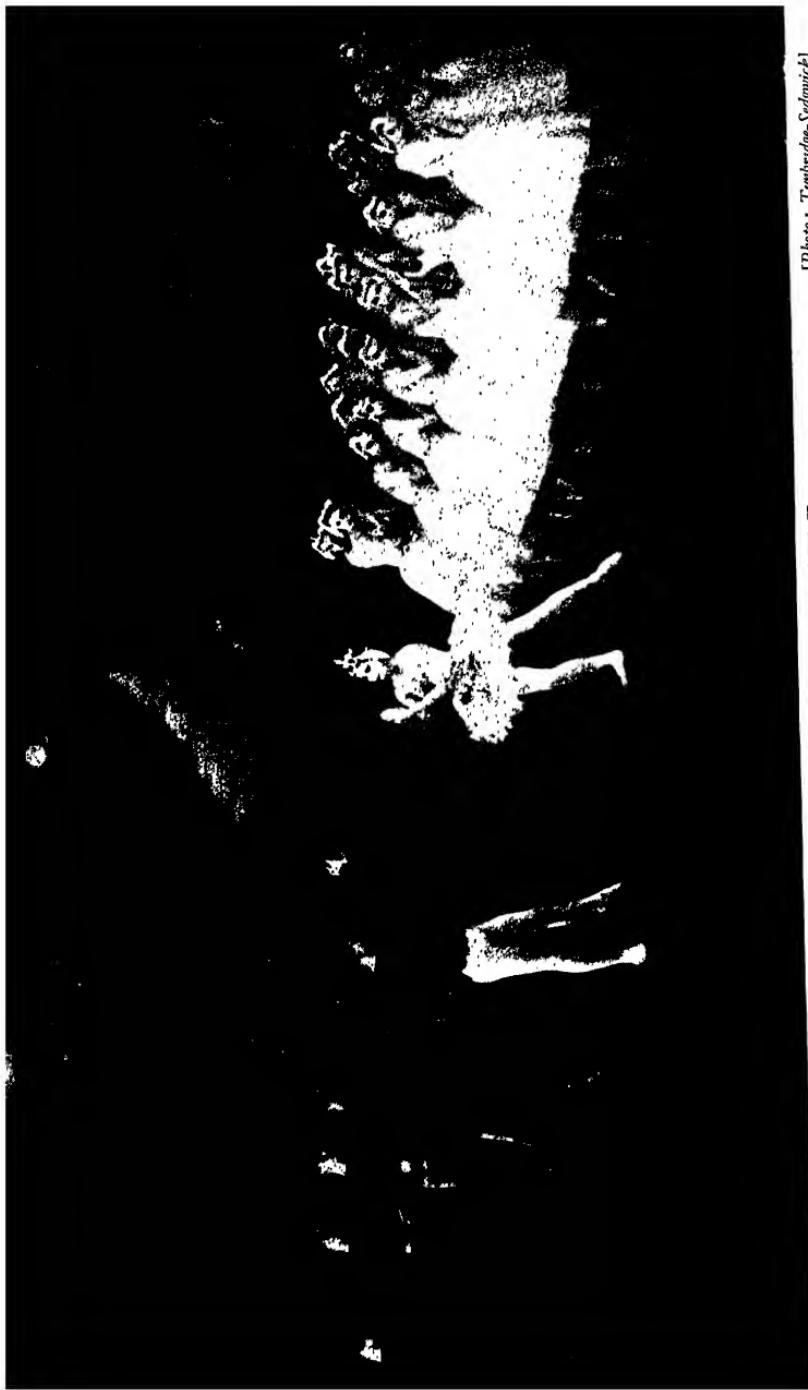


SCENE FROM "LE LAC DES CYGNES", ACT I

[Photo: Tamburige-Sedgwick]

[Photo: Tombridge-Sedgwick]

SCENE FROM "LE LAC DES CYGNES", ACT II



THE PRE-FOKINE BALLET

his companions to leave him as he desires to shoot the swans himself.

Siegfried, now alone, gazes into the far distance, where he sees the swans alight on the water and glide slowly upstream towards the near bank.¹ Suddenly, he starts back in astonishment, for, where he glimpsed a swan's curved crest, he now seems to see a human face. Quickly he conceals himself behind a tree-trunk, and waits in expectation.

Enter a beautiful young woman, her pale features wistful and preoccupied. She wears a white dress adorned with swan's feathers, while on her dark hair glitters a small gold crown. For an instant poised, she arches her neck from side to side like a swan preening its feathers; at this moment Siegfried steals from his hiding place but remains motionless, overwhelmed by the stranger's loveliness. Charmed with her beauty and mystery, he asks her whence she comes and how she is called. She replies that her name is Odette and relates how a wicked enchanter called Rothbart transformed her into a swan, whereupon her distraught mother wept so much that a lake was formed from her tears. Continuing her tale, Odette declares that she is doomed to remain a swan except for the hours between midnight and dawn, during which brief period Rothbart allows her to resume her human guise.

The Prince, sympathising with the lovely girl's tragic fate, asks the Swan Queen if there is no way in which she can be freed from the spell. Odette answers that, were she to meet a man whose love for her would be as great as hers for him, and who would make her his wedded wife, the enchantment would be broken and she would never again be a swan. At this moment Rothbart appears in the likeness of a grey owl. Siegfried levels his crossbow to shoot, but Odette entreats him to lower his weapon, which he does.

The owl vanishes. As the lovers stroll towards the woods, the Prince, already enamoured of Odette's fascinating beauty, invites her to the ball he is to give on the morrow, when he must choose a bride, and vows that she shall be his choice.

¹ The swans are invisible to the audience.

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But Odette declares that she cannot be present at the ball until Rothbart's spell is broken. She warns Siegfried that the enchanter will do all in his power to prevent their union and that were the Prince to break his vow she and all her friends must surely die.

As Siegfried walks with Odette into the woods, the glade is filled with her companion swans; enchanted beings like her, who, for the same brief space of time, are permitted to recover their existence as human beings. Rejoicing in their liberty, they dance. Suddenly Benno runs in and the swan-girls, filled with alarm, dart towards him in posture of attack. Then they huddle together, a trembling group.

Benno, seeing the cluster of white forms through the rising mist, mistakes them for swans and calls to his friends, who hurry to his side. They prepare their crossbows, level them at the supposed swans, and are about to loose the deadly bolts, when the Prince dashes in with upraised hand and bids them stay. A moment later, Odette darts towards her companions and stands before them, her arms outstretched in a gesture of protection.

The Prince reveals to his companions the secret of the enchanted girls and how, through the machinations of a wicked enchanter, they have been changed into swans; only between the hours of midnight and dawn are they free to resume their human shape. The huntsmen courteously doff their caps in apology for their error, which gesture is gracefully acknowledged by the swan-girls. Siegfried and Odette resume their stroll, while the huntsmen exit. The swan-girls resume their dance which ends in a charming group.

At this point Siegfried mournfully returns. He is greatly agitated because Odette, who had been walking with him, had suddenly vanished from his side. He goes towards the swan-girls, and gazing at each in turn, searches eagerly for the features of his beloved Odette. Then, all at once, she enters from the direction of the lake-side and darts toward the centre of the glade, where she dances, to be supported now by Benno, now by Siegfried himself. The Prince's

THE PRE-FOKINE BALLET

companions, moved by this happy reunion, embrace a swan-girl with either arm. After a little while the huntsmen discreetly withdraw into the woods so that the Prince may be freed of their presence. Then follows a dance by some cygnets, a dance by the two leading swans, and a solo by Odette, to end with a final *ensemble*.

A faint flush of light announces the approach of dawn. The Swan Queen, her features resuming their former wistful and preoccupied expression, bids the swan-girls return to the lake-side and slowly follows in their wake. The Prince, almost frantic at the thought of parting with Odette, extends his arms in endeavour to restrain her, but Odette, a slave to the enchanter's will, may not linger, and vanishes in the mist. The same strange haunting melody falls on the ear and again there is the faint sound of beating wings high overhead. The huntsmen come running in and gaze skywards as Siegfried, with upraised hand, traces the flight of the fast-receding swans.

Act. III. The great hall in Prince Siegfried's castle.

The background is formed by a tall yellow and red colonnade supporting a gallery decorated with small rounded arches. At the far end of the colonnade is a stone staircase reaching to the gallery. The left wing is formed by a white pagoda-like structure crowned with the figure of a swan with wings upraised. The pagoda is flanked by a sculptural group of three swans. The right wing consists of a red dais, on which is placed two thrones.

The curtain rises to the majestic strains of a ceremonial march, which heralds the entrance of the Princess Mother and her son, Prince Siegfried, followed by the Princess's ladies-in-waiting and a group of prospective brides, carrying feathered fans and dressed in gossamer robes of pearly tones. Pages in red and green, bearing leafy branches as wands of office, escort the Princess Mother and Prince to their thrones. The company group themselves about the hall so as to leave a central space for the dances about to follow. To the left are the emissaries of Poland and Hungary; to the right, those of Spain.

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The festivities begin with a *Pas de Trois* rendered by two *danseuses* and their cavalier; all three are dressed in white.

Then follows a ceremonious dance by the Brides who submit their grace and beauty for the Prince's approval, in the hope that one of their number will be invited to share his throne. Siegfried, one hand resting listlessly on his knee, the other gripping the arm of his throne, seems to be gazing over the dancers' heads into the far distance. Suddenly, recollecting himself, he steps down from the dais and for a brief space dances with each prospective bride in turn, then returns to his throne. The brides, disappointed at having failed to arouse his interest, return to their places with hardly disguised ill-humour.

A fanfare of trumpets announces the arrival of an important guest, the magician Rothbart, now wearing an oriental robe of red and yellow, who presents to the Prince his daughter, Odile, whom he has caused to assume the likeness of Odette. Siegfried, unaware of his visitor's identity, and deceived by Odile's resemblance to Odette, at once rises from his throne and descends the steps to greet her with a warmth which provokes jealous glances from the brides. Siegfried and Odette exit together.

Next follows a *Pas de Deux* by two Spanish ladies¹, then a *Csárdás* by the Hungarian nobles and their ladies, and finally a *Mazurka* by a group of Polish ladies and their cavaliers.

Now Siegfried enters dancing with the supposed Odette who bestows upon him a bewitching smile, while the magician urges her in a whisper to do all in her power to captivate the Prince. Siegfried, more and more enraptured, decides to make good his vow and wed the supposed Odette. Taking her hand in his and gracefully raising it to his lips, he formally asks her hand in marriage. At this moment a strange glow appears in one of the windows, in the light of which the real Odette, again transformed into a swan, is seen desperately beating her wings in endeavour to attract Siegfried's

¹ In the latest revival of this ballet there are now two couples instead of the former two ladies.



SCENE FROM "LE LAC DES CYGNES", ACT III

[Photo : T. Morlidge-Jedynacki]



SCENE FROM "LE LAC DES CYGNES", ACT IV

[Photo: Tchiricoff-Selgwick]

THE PRE-FOKINE BALLET

attention. Odile glances furtively at the window, fearing this unexpected interruption may foil her father's plot, but Siegfried is too infatuated to pay heed.

Taking leave of his bride-elect the Prince goes to the magician and asks his consent to marry his daughter. The magician, elated, agrees. He asks Siegfried to swear that he will be eternally faithful to his daughter. No sooner has Siegfried taken this oath of fidelity than Odile, with a triumphant smile, reveals her true identity. Siegfried, realising that he has been duped, starts back in mingled apprehension and rage. Suddenly, there is a flash of lightning followed by a resounding crash of thunder, and the great hall is plunged in darkness, during which confusion Rothbart and Odile vanish from sight. The terrified courtiers seek safety in disorderly flight, while the Princess Mother swoons on her throne. The Prince, now mindful of Odette's warning and distraught at the consequences of his act, stumbles a few paces like a man in a dream, then falls headlong to the ground. The curtain descends.

Act IV. The lake-side. The scene is the same as that for Act II.

When the curtain rises, little groups of swan-girls are seen assembling at their customary meeting-place. They are joined by their two leaders, who ask their companions if they have seen the Queen. They sadly shake their heads in denial. While awaiting the Queen's hoped-for arrival, the swan-girls pass the time in dancing.

At last Odette arrives, her expression downcast, her eyes filled with tears. In a moment of despair she tries to throw herself into the lake, but is prevented from doing so by the two leaders of the swans, who ask the reason for her action. The Swan Queen replies that the one she loves has failed her at the moment of trial, so, deprived of his affection, she has no desire to live. The two swan-girls comfort Odette and declare that they will restore her lover to her.

The Swan Queen, however, refuses to be comforted and summons some cygnets who group themselves about her.

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Reaffirming her determination to die, she runs toward the lake-side, but is stopped by the two leaders who conduct her back to the centre of the glade, where some of the swans form a protective group about her.

Enter the Prince, who is seen anxiously searching for his beloved Odette. As he goes from group to group, the swan-girls about the Queen draw aside and she is seen plaintively to call to him. He goes to Odette and implores her forgiveness, which she grants, adding sadly that nothing can avail her now. As they stroll towards the woods, the swan-girls resume their dancing. Presently the lovers return. Odette tells the Prince that she is doomed to die, but Siegfried tells her that he loves her dearly and will save her. They express their mutual affection in a dance, attended by the admiring swan-girls. Suddenly the magician Rothbart enters in the guise of an enormous owl. The Prince promptly attacks the intruder, while Odette and her companions watch with growing apprehension the swaying fortunes of the struggle. At last, Rothbart withdraws and the lovers embrace for joy. But the Queen repeats her conviction that her life is forfeit and, running to the bank, throws herself into the lake.

The Prince kneels in utter despair, his sorrow echoed by Odette's companions, who also kneel and bow their heads in grief. Siegfried declares that he, too, will die, since there is no longer any purpose in living. So saying, he leaps into the lake and is drowned.

Again the evil owl appears and the swan-girls turn sadly towards him. The owl retires and at once the glade is plunged into gloom. The Prince's supreme sacrifice has caused the death of the magician, Rothbart.

Gradually the light returns and the swan-girls, nevermore to be swans, are seen massed in two diagonal lines. In the distance there glides into view over the dark water a shell-like barque of gold bearing the Swan Queen and Siegfried, re-united in a happier world, since Siegfried did not scruple to give his very life for love of his cherished Odette.



THE PRE-FOKINE BALLET

Le Lac des Cygnes, with choreography by Julius Reisinger, was first produced at the Bolshoy Theatre, Moscow, on February 20th/March 4th, 1877, for the benefit of a ballerina called Karpakova, of whom little is known except that she took the role of Odette.

Contemporary notices suggest that the production was an amateurish affair. The conductor was a dilettante, while the choreographer omitted many of Tchaikovsky's numbers on the ground that they were undanceable, and replaced them with established successes from other ballets. Under these circumstances it is hardly surprising that the ballet was a complete fiasco, for which Tchaikovsky generously took the blame, attributing the failure to weaknesses in his score. He declared his intention to revise his composition, but his death in 1893 prevented the fulfilment of his plan.

Tchaikovsky's demise led to an increasing realisation of the importance of his contribution to Russian music and the authorities planned a memorial performance in his honour. While making a choice of material from Tchaikovsky's ballets, Marius Petipa, the principal architect of the Imperial Russian Ballet, sent to Moscow for the score of *Le Lac des Cygnes*, long since buried in the theatre archives. He was delighted with the work and immediately wished to set about re-planning the ballet, but owing to lack of time it was decided to present Act II only, that is, the scene at the lake-side. But Petipa, at this period no longer interested in romantic themes, contented himself with sketching the general style and character of the dances and confided their actual choreography to his assistant, Lev Ivanov. The second act was first presented at the Maryinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg, on February 17th/29th, 1894.

The complete work was first performed at the same theatre on January 15th/27th, 1895, for the benefit of the Italian ballerina, Pierina Legnani. The first and third acts are generally held to be the work of Petipa, the second and fourth that of his assistant. Ivanov is a rather neglected and shadowy figure in the history of the Imperial Ballet, and

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more than one Russian writer has hinted that some of the ballets whose choreography is attributed to Petipa, include work by his assistant, for which the latter received no credit. Of the several ballets devised by Ivanov, the second act of *Le Lac des Cygnes* represents the peak of his achievement.

Ivanov was a man of modest and retiring disposition, always willing to help without clamouring for reward and recognition. In his youth he had danced with some of the stars of the Romantic Ballet in its prime, and, brought up in that tradition, his choreographic ideal was expressiveness, a kind of choreographic "song without words," a lyrical and elegiac form of dance. He did not feel at home in *Casse-Noisette* except in the Snowflake *ballabile*, of which we in England have probably seen little more than a sketch of the original work, and the *Grand Pas de Deux* of the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier.

When fortune placed the second act of *Le Lac des Cygnes* in his hands, it is easy to imagine the joy this must have occasioned him, for now he had a subject after his own heart, a poetical idea expressed in lyric music. The symphonic treatment of the music is echoed in Ivanov's choreography. It is the quality found in the second act of *Giselle* and rediscovered by Fokine in his ballet, *Les Sylphides*.

This second act of *Le Lac des Cygnes* is a masterpiece of choreography in which the dances of Odette alone or with her partner, emerge not as separate numbers but like so many *soli* or duets against a chorus of voices, which from time to time join in. The dances of Odette and her companion are conceived in an idiom based on bird behaviour, so that we are constantly reminded of the dual nature of these fantastic beings, beautiful girls from midnight to dawn, swans from dawn to midnight.

The small circular movement of the head used by birds to preen their neck and breast feathers; the use of the arms curved to the sides like folded wings; the arms outstretched and fluttering like wings; the use of *petits battements* to suggest the trembling of a wing-tip or the freeing of a leg from tiny

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drops of water; are all adaptations of bird behaviour. It is interesting to note how the head and arms are used not to adorn the body but as an integral part of the expressive concept. Ivanov's choreography is an illustration of that essential axiom, so seldom applied, which declares: "It is not enough to dance with the feet, one must also dance with the arms and body." There is a lighter and gayer version of bird behaviour in the lively and popular *pas de quatre* of the cygnets.

In the love episodes between Odette and Siegfried the same ideas are developed. When the music soars to express Odette's desire to escape from Siegfried, she rises in the air, lifts one leg and extends the foot, like a bird trying to step outside a narrowing noose. Then after a brief pause, she is lowered to express her mingled love and fear in a swift *pirouette*. These same theories are demonstrated in the fourth and last act, which is largely a beautiful expression of sorrow on the part of Odette's companions at her non-arrival, and later their sympathy for the Queen's distress at Siegfried's unwitting betrayal of his plighted troth to her.

The first and third acts are the work of Marius Petipa and they follow the conventions of the time. The first scene is largely mime, generally of a rather commonplace character; in compensation there are some good *ensembles* for the peasants and a beautifully composed *pas de trois* which, in the Sadler's Wells version, has been transferred to the third act.

The third act contains the traditional group of character dances rendered by guests or presumed emissaries from foreign countries. For instance, the "*Dance of the Brides*" with its graceful manipulation of large fans; the "*Mazurka*" which looks a little strange in Hurry's costumes¹; and the "*Pas Espagnole*," once danced by two ladies and their cavaliers, now rendered by two ladies, which number is mediocre both musically and choreographically. One attraction of this act is the famous thirty-two *fouettés*, the technical *tour de force*

¹ In the latest revival of this ballet the broad-brimmed hats originally worn by the male dancers of the "*Mazurka*" are omitted.

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introduced by Legnani, the first Odette of the St. Petersburg production. The difficulty of the *fouettés* is that they should be executed on place, that is to say, without travelling towards the footlights.

There are only two principal characters in this ballet, those of Siegfried and Odette-Odile. The part of Siegfried, apart from the solo and *pas de deux* in the third act, is practically all mime, except when he is required to support the *ballerina* in her *adages*.

The double role of Odette-Odile, originally composed for two dancers, has for many years been taken by the same dancer; first, to fulfil the condition that the scheming Odile shall exactly resemble the tender Odette and thus dupe the Prince, and secondly, to enable the *ballerina* to demonstrate her ability to suggest evil without any exterior aid. Since this is the aim, it is curious that Odile's dress should generally differ in colour and design from that of Odette. Margot Fonteyn's appearance is well suited to the part of Odette-Odile, and she gives an interesting performance of the double role, both as dancer and mime.

The character, Rothbart, does not wear in this production the traditional red beard which is implicit in the name.

Le Lac des Cygnes, whether in the form of the second act or the complete work, is to be found in the repertory of most ballet companies. The ballet was first performed in this country at the London Hippodrome in May, 1910, with Olga Preobrazhenskaya as Odette and George Kyaksh as Siegfried. *Le Lac des Cygnes* is a classic, and Tchaikovsky's music, which includes so many haunting melodies, especially in the second act, the beauty of Ivanov's choreography, and the romantic theme, have won it a place in public affection second only to *Giselle*. Indeed, in Russia to-day, *Le Lac des Cygnes* holds pride of place.

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COPPÉLIA

*Ballet in 2 Acts and 3 Scenes.**Book: Charles Nuitter and Arthur Saint-Léon.**Music: Léo Delibes.**Scenery and costumes: William Chappell.**Choreography: Lev Ivanov and Enrico Cecchetti, reproduced and ammended by Nicholas Sergeyev.**First revived with present setting by "Wells" Company, Sadler's Wells Theatre, London,¹ April 15th, 1940.*

CHARACTERS

Swanilda	.	.	.	Mary Honer
Franz	.	.	.	Robert Helpmann
Dr. Coppelius (a toy- maker)	.	.	.	Claude Newman
Burgomaster	.	.	.	John Greenwood
Coppelia	.	.	.	Bunty Kelley
The Duke	.	.	.	Leslie Edwards
<i>Divertissements:</i>				
Dance of the Hours	.	.	.	Ensemble
Dawn	.	.	.	Pamela May
Prayer	.	.	.	June Brae
Hymen	.	.	.	{ Ursula Moreton Richard Ellis
Pas de Deux	.	.	.	{ Mary Honer Robert Helpmann
Variation	.	.	.	Robert Helpmann
Variation	.	.	.	Mary Honer
Finale	.	.	.	Mary Honer, Robert Helpmann and ensemble

Peasants, Automata, Friends of Swanilda

¹ This ballet was first revived by the "Wells" company at the Sadler's Wells Theatre, London, on March 21st, 1933, with scenery and costumes by Edwin Calligan. In that revival the last scene was omitted. The principal roles of Swanilda, Franz, and Coppelius were taken by Lydia Lopokova, Stanley Judson, and Hedley Briggs.

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Act I. A square in a little town on the borders of Galicia.

After a short overture which begins quietly then quickens to the enchanting rhythm of the Mazurka, again to die down, the curtain rises on the setting. In the background is a group of grey stone houses with bright red sloping roofs and pennants flying in the wind. The largest house is thrown into sharp relief by the brilliant sunshine, which causes the near wall to cast a triangular-shaped pool of deep shadow. To the left is a cluster of lighter-coloured buildings. To the right is the abode of Coppelius, a house of dark grey stone with a circular porch surmounted by a balcony. Overhead gleams a light blue sky dotted with small patches of white cloud.

On the balcony of Coppelius's house a demure and pretty girl in pink is seen sitting in a chair. She is reading a book with absorbed attention. The front door opens and Coppelius emerges. He is an old man with a slight stoop, who wears a smoking-cap and red velvet dressing-gown covered with cabalistic signs. He is held in awe by the townsfolk, for his secretive manner and the mysterious sounds which come from his house have caused him to be regarded as a necromancer. Coppelius takes a few steps forward, glances up at the seated girl, rubs his hands with satisfaction and returns indoors.

From the large house to the left comes a young village maiden known as Swanilda, who gazes with interest at the girl in pink, said to be Coppelius's daughter, with whom she believes her sweetheart, Franz, to be in love. Swanilda greets Coppelia with a curtsy, which she repeats, but since the girl disdains to reply, Swanilda goes away, shaking her fist in vexation.

Enter Franz, a handsome peasant youth in pale blue and green. He looks upwards towards the girl in pink, who, at the direction of Coppelius, now seen to be standing behind her, rises, kisses her hand to Franz, sits down again, and retires, her place taken by Coppelius, whose wizened features cause Franz to turn away and seek diversion elsewhere. Meanwhile Swanilda returns to witness in secret this concrete

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proof of her lover's interest. However, pretending to have seen nothing, she gaily pursues a butterfly which is finally captured by Franz, who triumphantly pins the insect in his cap. Swanilda reproaches him for his cruelty and asks him if he prefers Coppelia to her. His halting denials fail to convince and Swanilda, declaring that she loves him no longer, exits.

Now a happy band of youths and girls fill the square and delight in dancing the stirring measures of the Mazurka. The dance at an end, the company are joined by Swanilda. Franz goes to greet her, but is coldly repulsed.

Enter the burgomaster who, walking with slow official deliberation, announces that the lord of the manor has presented a bell to the town, and its installation is to be celebrated by a festival to be held on the morrow. He counsels all couples contemplating marriage to be wedded on that day, since they are to be given dowries in honour of the occasion. He asks Swanilda if it is her intention to be married, but she shakes her head. Next, taking up an ear of corn, she listens to it intently, then passes the stalk to Franz.

"Does it not say that you love me no longer?" she enquires.

Franz remains silent.

Then Swanilda presents the ear of corn to several of the girls and youths in turn, who each shake their head in intimation that they can hear nothing. Franz, relieved, extends his arms to embrace Swanilda, but she angrily pushes him back, snaps the stalk and throws it to the ground, then walks away.

Franz comes forward and, choosing a girl in green for partner, leads the company in dancing the Csárdás, which begins with slow majestic steps, followed by a sharp click of the heels, with a crossing and recrossing of dancers. The movement quickens to a lively finale in which the dancers whirl round and round, their feet stamping, their full sleeves whirling in time with the exciting rhythm.

Once more the burgomaster reminds the company of the

important occasion to-morrow, then takes his departure. The approach of night is heralded by the growing darkness.

Coppelius comes out of his house as though about to take an evening walk, supporting his legs with the aid of a stout stick. A crowd of mischievous youths run across the square and jostle the old man. He beats them off with his stick, then mops his heated brow with a handkerchief. As he takes this from his pocket he also pulls out his door-key, which falls to the ground as he continues on his way.

Swanilda returns, accompanied by some of her friends. One of them, catching sight of the key glittering in the growing moonlight, picks it up and shows it to Swanilda, who, taking the key, proposes that they shall peep into the mysterious house where Coppelius lives. Her friends excitedly agree. Swanilda inserts the key, unlocks the door, and the party glide into the house.

Now Franz enters the square, carrying a tall ladder, but, catching sight of Coppelius on his way back, he retires in a fright. Coppelius, having discovered the loss of his key, has returned to look for it. Failing to see the key on the ground, he goes towards his house and notices with mingled amazement and anger that the door is ajar. No sooner has he entered his abode than Franz reappears with the ladder, which he places against the balcony. As he mounts the rungs the curtain falls.

Act II. Scene I. Coppelius's workshop.

It is a dim chamber with sloping eaves. The dark rafters and ceiling are decorated with a sinister design of black bats flying against a red sky. The lower wall is decorated with painted panels each decorated with a green snake gliding over the ground. To the right is a red door; to the left, a recess masked by a red curtain. In the centre back is a tall window through which may be seen a panorama of roof-tops bathed in the silver moonlight. As the eyes become accustomed to the half-light it is possible to distinguish various objects. To the left, two life-size figures: an Astrologer with a telescope,

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and a seated Chinaman dressed in red satin. To the right, a table set with two silver cups and flanked by two chairs. And in the background two more life-size figures—a seated Pierrot and a Crusader armed with a sword.

Swanilda enters at the right followed by a number of her girl friends. They walk slowly in single file, taking tiny steps and glancing fearfully about them. Swanilda, bolder than the rest, goes towards the curtained recess and nervously draws the curtain aside. To her amazement she sees her rival for Franz's affections—the girl in pink, still reading. Swanilda tip-toes closer to her, but the girl remains motionless. Swanilda's friends urge her to touch the girl, which she does lightly, to draw back quickly. Since this action apparently passes unheeded, Swanilda twitches the girl's dress, again without result. Then, growing venturesome, Swanilda listens to Coppelia's heart, which is silent. Swanilda calls her friends to verify this fact, and then they discover that the supposed girl is merely a cleverly fashioned doll.

As the girls move away, Swanilda knocks against the figure of the Chinaman, who nods his head and jerks his hands up and down to a lively air. Amused at this display, the girls go to the other figures and set them all in motion. The Pierrot clashes his cymbals, the Crusader jerks his sword up and down, the figure with the telescope sits down, rises, lifts the telescope to its eyes, peers to right and left, then sits down again. In the midst of the din Coppelia arrives, shaking with suppressed rage. He lashes at the girls with his stick and drives them away, all save Swanilda who hides in the curtained recess. She intends to play a fine prank on the old man by putting on the doll's costume and taking her place. Coppelia, a little breathless from his unwonted exertions, sinks with relief into a chair.

Through the window the top of a ladder gradually rises into view, and presently we see Franz. He peers through the glass, cautiously opens the window and steps in. Meanwhile, Coppelia, who has observed the intruder, quickly crosses near the window where he stands motionless in the

shadow as though he himself were a doll. No sooner has the unsuspecting Franz passed in front of him, than Coppelius creeps forward and seizes the startled youth by the ear. Coppelius is minded to make use of his prisoner in order to carry out a long-cherished experiment. To this end he first reassures Franz with a show of good humour and invites him to be seated and share a bottle of wine, to which the visitor agrees. Coppelius then goes to a cupboard from which he takes a bottle of wine and into which he deftly introduces the contents of a phial of narcotic. Coppelius fills the cups with an air of pleasurable anticipation and proffers one to Franz, then he raises his own cup as though about to drink but contrives to fling the contents behind his chair. Franz, already dazed by the drugged wine, staggers towards the curtained recess, only to be dragged back by Coppelius, who settles the youth in his chair. His head drops forward on the table and he is soon sound asleep. Coppelius then goes to the recess and wheels out the supposed doll, still reading.

Now Coppelius fetches a secret book dealing with the art of necromancy, and rapidly turns over the pages in order to refresh his memory as to the directions for conducting the great experiment he wishes to attempt—the transmission of the life force of a living human being into a doll. Coppelius rises and makes certain prescribed passes over Franz until he feels that he has accumulated something of the youth's strength. Then Coppelius goes to the disguised Swanilda, and endeavours in one forceful gesture to impart Franz's strength to the doll. Stepping a few paces backward, he waits in anticipation. To his intense delight the doll slowly rises to an upright position and mechanically dances a few steps, jerking her head and arms, then comes to a stop. Excitedly Coppelius again consults his book and tries by the same methods as before to impart strength into her legs, when Swanilda takes the opportunity to beat his head and back.

At last Coppelius has the doll in a preparatory position when Swanilda begins another dance, frequently pretending to collapse in his arms. Now and again he attempts to join

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in the dance but, being seized with painful twinges, he is obliged to desist. The doll is once more motionless.

Coppelius considers the figure and again consults the book. He then goes towards the doll who seems to be looking for something. After some cogitation he hands her a mirror. She holds it at arm's length and posing *en arabesque* contemplates her reflection with satisfaction. Then Coppelius takes the mirror from the doll, whereupon she treats him to a very human display of bad temper. She snatches up the wine bottle and, holding it on high, dances round the room; then she begins to overturn the mechanical figures. Next she points to Franz and intimates that he should dance with her, a suggestion which Coppelius promptly rejects.

Seeking for something with which to pacify the doll he offers her a shawl and fan, when she promptly begins a tempestuous Spanish dance. Coppelius sits in his chair, watching her with admiration.

When the doll is again motionless, he puts a tartan scarf over her shoulder, which causes her to dance a lively Highland Fling.

Again Coppelius gets down on his hands and knees to peruse his book of magic, but Swanilda kicks it away with her foot and tries to tear the pages. Then she seizes the Crusader's sword and threatens Coppelius, who takes to his heels. Next she sets the Chinaman in motion, runs across to Franz, and rouses him from his stupor. The lovers fall into each other's arms. Coppelius, beginning to suspect that he has been tricked, runs to the recess and drags out the doll which has been deprived of both wig and clothes. The two lovers laugh mockingly at the old man who, overcome with disappointment and disillusion, buries his head in the lap of the despoiled doll.

Act II. Scene II. A terraced lawn before the residence of the lord of the manor.

The background is formed of a stone balustrade, behind the centre of which are four spiral columns supporting the

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presentation bell. In the distance is a greyish landscape with feathery foliage to right and left. The "wings" are formed of curtains of leaves wreathed with red ribbons and decorated with bells stamped from silver paper.

When the curtain rises the lord of the manor is seen welcoming his guests and distributing dowries to couples about to be married. Among these are Swanilda and Franz, now happily reconciled.

There is a stir among the bystanders as Coppelius makes his way forward and demands restitution for the damage done to his inventions. Swanilda generously offers her dowry to the distracted old man. But the Duke waves away this gesture and announces that he himself will make good any losses the toy-maker has sustained. Then, placing in his hands a bag of gold, which Coppelius gratefully receives, the lord of the manor gives the signal for the festivities to begin.

First comes the *Dance of the Hours* danced by girls in dresses shaded from the lightest of pastel colours to deep blue.

Next, a *pas seul*, a purely classical number entitled *Dawn*.

Then another *pas seul* styled *Prayer*.

Follows *Hymen*, in which a peasant youth and his sweetheart dance a character *pas de deux* based on beats, turns, and whirlings round to music which suggests the Breton bagpipe.

Now comes a classical *pas de deux* in which Swanilda, wearing a dark blue bodice and white skirt, dances an *adage* supported by Franz clad in tunic and hose of blue.

Next comes *Work* when four peasants, two carrying sickles and two holding spindles, dance to arm movements suggestive of the actions of reaping and spinning.

This is followed by two *variations*. The first, for Franz, is a brilliant number based on beats, *tours en l'air*, *jetés en tournant*, and *pirouettes*, concluding with a difficult fall (a *double tour*) on to one knee. The second number, for Swanilda, is a light dance *sur les pointes*, with accelerated *tours sur place*, followed by a series of *petits tours*.

The finale is a brilliant *ensemble* in which the qualities of

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each soloist are exploited in a series of *tours de force*, and in which character steps are alternated with those of the classical ballet.



Coppelia is one of the earliest, if not the first, ballet to be based on the theme of a doll's coming to life. The book, written by Charles Nuitter, then archivist to the Paris Opera, was adapted from the story, *Der Sandmann*, written by the German romanticist, Ernst T. A. Hoffmann.

Coppelia, or the Girl with the Enamel Eyes, to give the ballet its full title, was originally presented in three scenes at the Paris Opera on May 25th, 1870, with choreography by Arthur Saint-Léon. Nuitter planned the principal role of Swanilda for a promising young *danseuse* at the Opera, called Léontine Beaugrand, but the management decided otherwise and gave the part to Joseppa Bozacchi, a girl of sixteen, who made a decided success in it. But her triumph was short-lived, for on July 19th the Franco-German War broke out, Paris was invested, and little Bozacchi died of a virulent siege fever.

The chief interest of this ballet is Delibes' sparkling music with its lilting melodies so well suited to the dance. Notice, too, the symphonic quality of the orchestration, and how adroitly it is "coloured" by the skilful blending of the various instruments. The actual choreography has no particular distinction, the best numbers being the "Mazurka" and "Csárdás" in Act I, and the *Pas de Deux* by Swanilda and Franz, and their respective *variations*,¹ in the final scene. It was in this ballet that the Hungarian folk dance, Csárdás, was first introduced, and its success did much to promote the introduction into ballets of "numbers" based on national dances or folk dances.

Coppelia follows the pattern established by the Romantic Ballet in that it is written for a *ballerina*, who forms the pivot

¹ In this version the choreography of the *Pas de Deux* and Franz's *variation* are by N. Sergeyev.

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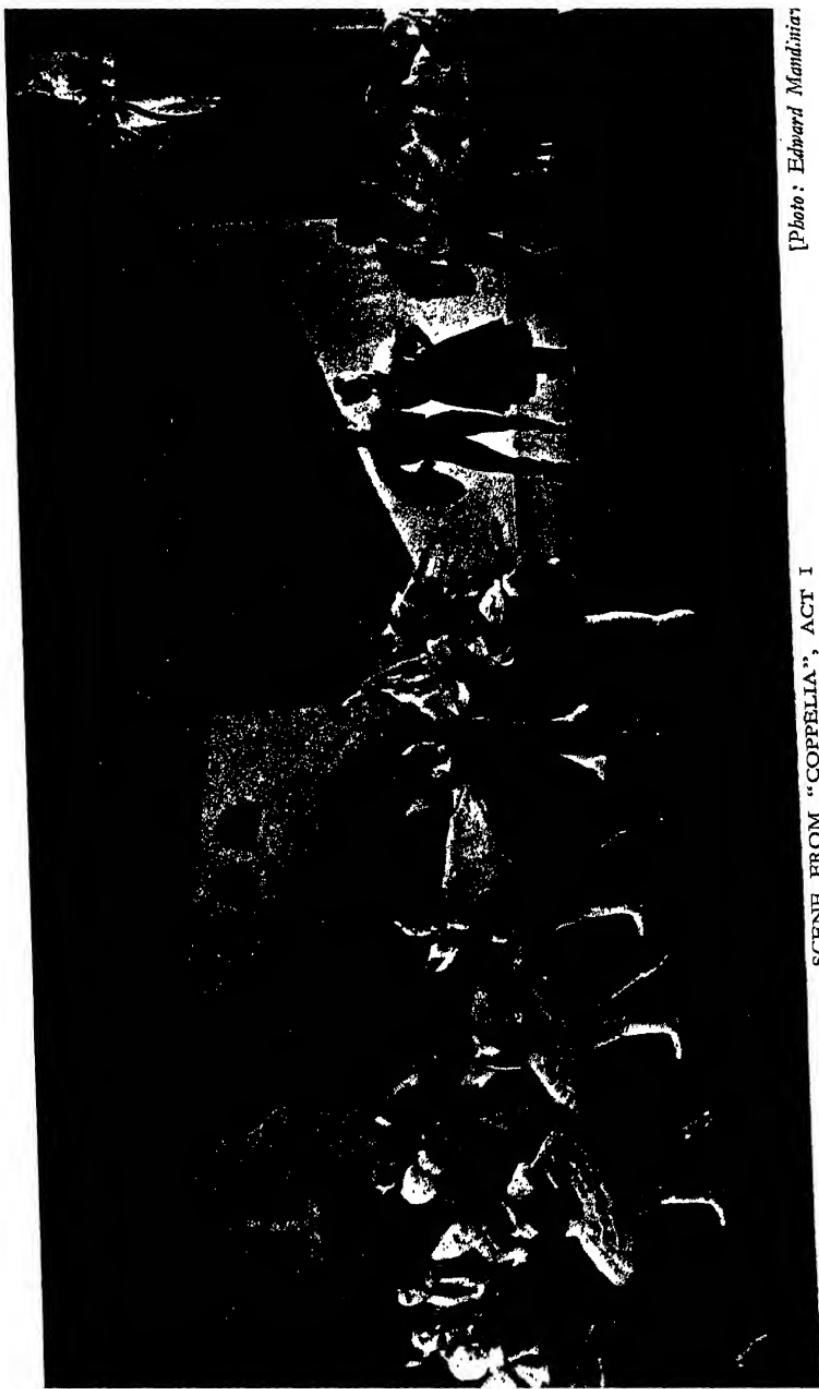
of the action. The role of Swanilda offers considerable opportunities to a dancer-mime. It is an exacting part because Swanilda dances in all three scenes, and some of the "numbers" are both technically difficult and physically exhausting.

The interpreter of Swanilda must present a charming village belle, who is also shrewd, and endowed with a piquant sense of humour. She is obviously deeply in love with Franz, although she masks her affection with an assumed air of indifference, determined to make him suffer for his attention to Coppelia, of whom she is naturally jealous. But when Swanilda appears in the *divertissement* in the final scene, she is no longer the village belle, but a *ballerina* who animates the whole with the inimitable grace and sparkling precision of her dancing.

The character of Coppelius, which is purely a mimetic role, takes on varied hues according to its interpreter. One prominent member of the company has decided that it is a comic role, and therefore makes one of his entrances leaning on a stick which might have been borrowed from Sir Harry Lauder's collection.

The presentation of Coppelius as a comic character, with a partiality for such time-worn methods of provoking laughter as slipping on the steps of his home, peeping under the supposed doll's skirts, and the like, seems far removed from the author's conception.

In reality, Coppelius is designed to provide the dramatic relief to the light comedy role of Swanilda. Coppelius is a Hoffmannesque conception. He is a mechanical genius who dabbles in the arts of necromancy, a combination of Vaucanson and Cagliostro. He is the same character who appears in Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffmann*, where Coppelius, the mechanic and wizard, in collaboration with Spalanzi, the physiologist, fashions a beautiful girl automaton. Spalanzi passes off the automaton as his daughter Olympia, and the student Hoffmann falls in love with her. Few spectators of this ballet, as the character is generally interpreted by members of the "Wells" company, would ever imagine that Coppelius was intended



SCENE FROM "COPPELIA", ACT I

[Photo: Edward Mandini]



to be a sinister magician. By all means let Coppelia be querulous, rheumatic, preoccupied, if such qualities add to his stage possibilities, but please spare us the comic, or near cousin to him.

There are some curious errors of production in the present version of *Coppelia*. Swanilda's miming in the second half of the first scene sometimes suggests that she has found out that the girl Coppelia, to whom Franz pays his addresses, is nothing but a toy. This premature discovery makes the intruders' cautious approach to Coppelia in the second scene irrelevant and mars the whole effect.

In the original script the evening shadows begin to fall after the Csárdás. This growing darkness explains why Coppelia, after being jostled by rowdy youths, might fail to notice that he has dropped his key. The same friendly darkness enables Franz to set his ladder against the window-sill of what he believes to be Coppelia's room. But in the Wells' production, the first scene ends in brilliant sunlight.

When the curtain rises on the second scene, the open french window reveals a panorama of roof-tops bathed in moonlight. It is difficult to believe that Coppelia, who is seen entering his house at the close of the first scene, should be so long climbing the short flight of stairs to his workshop that, by the time he arrives there, day has changed to night.

Next, consider Swanilda's dances in this scene. The essence of the dances is that she should act like the doll Coppelia believes her to be. Hence she should come to a definite stop each time a dance ends, like an automaton whose clock-work has run down. If the supposed doll is permitted to walk about after the conclusion of a dance, while Coppelia clasps about her a scarf or places a fan in her hand, the illusion is spoilt. The suggestion of being a doll should be retained until, tired of the pretence, she begins to run wild and attempts to destroy everything in her path. Sometimes, when executing the dances as a supposed doll, Swanilda, whenever Coppelia's back is turned to her, tries to kick him or pummel his back with her fists. It is conceivable that she might direct

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the line of dance so that Coppelia is struck by her working foot. But that she should actually pummel him with her fists is surely exceeding a doll's prerogative.

GISELLE

Fantastic Ballet in 2 Acts.

Book: Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges, Théophile Gautier, and Jean Coralli.

Music: Adolphe Adam.

Scenery and costumes: James Bailey.

Choreography: Jules Perrot and Jean Coralli, reproduced by Nicholas Sergeyev.

First revived¹ with present setting by "Wells" Co., Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London, June 12th, 1946.

CHARACTERS

Albrecht, Duke of Silesia .	Alexis Rassine
The Prince of Courland .	David Davenport
Wilfrid, the Duke's Squire.	Leslie Edwards
Hilarion, a Gamekeeper .	David Paltenghi
Bathilde, the Duke's Fiancée	Jean Bedells
Berthe, Giselle's Mother .	Elizabeth Kennedy
Giselle, a Peasant Girl .	Margot Fonteyn
Myrtha, Queen of the Wilis	Beryl Grey
Zulmé } Two Wilis	Gillian Lynne
Moyna }	Moira Shearer
Children, Vine-gatherers, Huntsmen, Lords, Ladies, Wilis.	

Act I. A corner of the Rhine at vintage time.

A woodland glade with the branches of trees entwined overhead in a natural arch, their leaves tinted with the

¹ This ballet was first revived by the "Wells" Co. at the "Old Vic" Theatre, London, on January 1st, 1934, with Markova in the title-role.

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orange hue of autumn and pierced by shafts of sunlight. To the left is Giselle's thatched, whitewashed cottage, gay with pots of flowers and dark blue clusters of grapes hanging from the vines that climb about its walls. To the right is a smaller cottage and before it a rustic bench. The background is formed by a distant landscape and a hill crowned by a feudal castle. The dawn is just breaking.

The curtain rises on an empty stage. Then little groups of peasant girls walk past the cottage beckoning to one another as though going to work in the fields. Again the scene is empty, then Hilarion, a gamekeeper, enters. He goes to the door of Giselle's cottage and is about to knock when, hearing approaching footsteps, he conceals himself behind the cottage.

From the cottage on the far side, presently emerges a young man whom you must know is Albrecht, Duke of Silesia, disguised in peasant clothes. He goes towards Giselle's cottage, followed by his squire, Wilfrid, who seems to be dissuading him from some project, but Albrecht abruptly dismisses Wilfrid who, bowing low, takes his departure. Albrecht knocks on Giselle's door, then hides behind a bush.

Giselle opens her door and steps out, but is surprised to find the glade empty. Hearing the sound of kisses blown to her by Albrecht, she stops in a listening attitude. Aware of her lover's presence she tries to find him; failing to do so, she gives vent to her annoyance by a petulant stamp of her foot. Then Albrecht, of whose high rank she is quite unaware, and whom she knows only as Loys, and takes to be a peasant like herself, comes to greet her. This leads to a little amorous by-play until, alarmed by Albrecht's growing boldness, she is seized with shyness and flees to her cottage, hotly pursued by Albrecht who quietly draws her back. Reassured, she permits Albrecht to slip his arm into hers and lead her into a brief dance. Then Giselle passes in front of Albrecht and, spreading her skirts, sits on the rustic bench. Albrecht asks her to make room for him, which she does. But whenever he adroitly moves a little closer to her, she correspondingly edges away, then suddenly rises and runs to her cottage. But

Albrecht bounds forward in pursuit and again draws her back.

He declares his love for her and swears eternal fidelity. Giselle, who has inherited the superstitions of country folk, begs him not to swear affection and, running to the window-box of her cottage, followed by her lover, she plucks a marguerite. Then, beckoning to Albrecht, who watches her intently, she returns to the bench and, sitting down, begins to pick the flower petal by petal, saying, "he loves me, he loves me not," nodding and shaking her head in turn. When the test appears to end in a negative, she flings down the flower and gives way to tears. Albrecht picks up the discarded flower and, continuing to pluck the petals, contrives to end with "he loves me." Giselle, soothed and enraptured, takes Albrecht's arm and dances a few steps with him.

The lovers continue to dance until, in an access of emotion, Giselle kisses her forefinger and lightly presses it to Albrecht's brow, then flees towards her cottage, where she is halted by the sudden appearance of Hilarion. Confronting her with folded arms, he forces her back into the centre of the glade and reproves the lovers for their immodest behaviour. Giselle, furious at this insinuation, drives Hilarion back. The game-keeper, overcome by this rejection, falls on his knees and declares his love for her. Giselle mocks his overtures, laughs derisively, and turns her back upon him. Hilarion, enraged, raises his fist as if to strike her, but Albrecht hurls him aside and bids him begone. He walks slowly away, shaking his fist at Albrecht, and vowing vengeance.

Albrecht takes Giselle in his arms and they are about to stroll away when they encounter a party of village girls carrying baskets of grapes. They gather about Giselle, who asks them what they have been doing. When they point to the contents of their baskets, she bids them come and dance, an invitation they accept, with alacrity. Setting down their baskets, they group themselves in a large semicircle and, joined by Albrecht and Giselle, dance to the strains of a melodious waltz.

Just as the dance ends with Giselle's sitting on Albrecht's

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knee and their friends grouped about them, the door of Giselle's cottage opens and her mother, half angry and half worried, comes bustling out. The girls, smiling, crowd about her so that Giselle can hide behind their skirts. But her mother soon disperses them and drags Giselle from their midst, exclaiming in horror at her daughter's flushed face. She takes out her handkerchief, mops her daughter's brow, smoothes her dress, and then enquires what she has been doing. Giselle laughingly explains that she has been dancing and does a few steps by way of illustration. Her mother bids her rest and warns Giselle that if she will persist in dancing, she will die and become a wili. Her girl friends look on, half amused, half afraid.

The mother drives her daughter towards the cottage. Unwilling, Giselle tries to rejoin her friends and Albrecht, but her mother forces her daughter to go inside the cottage. The girls take up their baskets and exit, Albrecht goes off in the opposite direction.

No sooner is the glade empty than Hilarion enters. He goes to Giselle's cottage and listens, but, disturbed by the sound of a distant hunting-horn, followed by the approach of a hunting-party, the gamekeeper runs to Albrecht's cottage, where he hides.

Wilfrid enters at the head of a number of huntsmen, who line the end of the glade. Now come six ladies-in-waiting, followed by Bathilde and her father, the Prince of Courland. The Prince glances round, while Wilfrid, at his command, knocks at the door of Giselle's cottage.

The door is opened by the mother, who asks Wilfrid the reason for his visit. He indicates the Prince and Bathilde and explains that they desire rest and refreshment. The mother curtsies and, calling two girls from inside the cottage, bids them bring out a table and two stools, which they set before the cottage. Then they place a pitcher and goblets on the table.

Giselle emerges from the cottage and, noticing the unwanted activities, goes enquiringly to her mother, then,

catching sight of Wilfrid, she curtsies to him. But the squire shakes his head and, indicating the Prince and Bathilde, explains that it is to them that homage should be paid. Bathilde, remarking Giselle, praises the girl's beauty to her father. Giselle goes to him, curtsies, and begs them to be seated at table. The Prince assents, and taking Bathilde by the hand, leads her to the table at which they take their places, both facing the audience.

Wilfrid waits on the Prince and his daughter. Bathilde puts the goblet to her lips, and, in answer to her father's look of enquiry, expresses her satisfaction with the contents. Meanwhile, Giselle steals timidly near Bathilde and, attracted by the silken sheen of her dress, kneels beside her and furtively fingers the material. Bathilde, touched by Giselle's artless pleasure in her dress, places a finger under her chin and bids her rise. Then she walks a little way with her and enquires as to the nature of her work. Giselle replies that she spins and weaves. To this Bathilde replies, "and is that your heart's delight?" "No," replies Giselle, "my heart's delight is to dance."

Then, as if to give visual expression to her words, Giselle dances a few steps and ends with a curtsy to Bathilde, who watches her with evident admiration. The Prince rises from table soon after Bathilde and strolls aside. Giselle's mother stands near her cottage and, seeing her daughter dancing, expresses her disapproval, warning her that she will become a wili, but Giselle pays no heed.

Bathilde goes to her father and, pointing to her necklace, earrings, and bracelet, asks his permission to present one of them to Giselle. On his assent, Bathilde takes off her necklace and beckons to Giselle. When she approaches, Bathilde places the necklace about Giselle's neck, whereupon the latter seizes her benefactor's hand and kisses it with fervent gratitude. Giselle runs to her mother and proudly displays Bathilde's gift, which her mother admires profusely.

Giselle now goes to the Prince and invites him to rest awhile in her cottage, which invitation he graciously accepts.

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Wilfrid opens the cottage door, inclining his head, as the Prince and Bathilde enter, succeeded by Giselle and her mother. The Prince then retraces his steps and, summoning Wilfrid, gives him his hunting-horn, instructing him to sound a call on it should his presence be required. Wilfrid, bowing low, takes the hunting-horn. The Prince goes once more into Giselle's cottage. Wilfrid dismisses the huntsmen, after which he hangs up the hunting-horn by the cottage door and departs in the same direction.

Hilarion emerges from Albrecht's cottage carrying a knightly sword. Pointing to the weapon, he indicates that he discovered it in the cottage, and that the sword shall be the instrument of his vengeance. He goes towards Giselle's door and is about to knock when he hears the voices of some approaching girls. He quickly runs into the woods.

The girls enter dancing. After a while, they stop, run to Giselle's cottage and knock at the door. When her mother appears, they beg her to allow Giselle to dance¹ with them. At first she refuses, then finally consents. As she begins to dance, her friends group themselves about her.

At the end, they applaud her solo, then themselves dance an *ensemble*, towards the close of which they are joined by Giselle and Albrecht. The dance ends with the happy laughing lovers clasped in each other's arms.

Suddenly Hilarion enters, rushes towards the lovers and pushes them apart. Then, turning to Giselle, he declares: "You may be engaged, but let me tell you that that man (pointing to Albrecht) is an impostor." Signing to Giselle to wait, he offers to bring proof. He runs off and returns bearing Albrecht's sword, which he proffers—hilt first—to Giselle for her inspection.

Wilfrid enters and asks Hilarion what he is doing, while Giselle regards the sword with the most casual interest. Hilarion, enraged, crosses to Giselle and, stressing the sword's costly hilt, points to Albrecht as the owner. Giselle pushes

¹ In this production the scene where Giselle is crowned Queen of the Vintage is cut.

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Hilarion aside and, going to Albrecht and putting her arm on his shoulder, asks him if the sword is his. He is silent and hangs his head, then, furious in his turn, Albrecht dashes at Hilarion and, dragging the sword from the scabbard grasped by the gamekeeper, is about to run him through when Wilfrid stays his arm. In the ensuing struggle the sword falls to the ground.

Giselle goes to her mother, while Hilarion runs to the cottage door, seizes the hunting-horn, and despite Wilfrid's attempt to stop him, succeeds in blowing it.

The Prince emerges from the cottage, followed by Bathilde. Her ladies and the huntsmen return. The Prince, recognising Albrecht, draws his daughter's attention to his presence and to his strange manner of dress. She goes to Albrecht and enquires what is the matter. He replies, "Nothing," and, dropping on one knee, kisses her hand. Giselle, who has watched this episode with growing uneasiness, forces herself between them and asks Albrecht what he is about. Albrecht is silent. Then Giselle turns to Bathilde and asks: "Are you his betrothed?" Albrecht signs to Bathilde to be silent, but, too late, she points to the ring on her finger.

Giselle, in a frenzy, tears off the necklace presented to her by Bathilde and flings it to the ground, then she runs to her mother and throws herself at her feet, sobbing with anguish. Albrecht runs to her side and, kneeling, tries to calm her, while her friends gather about her in mingled amazement and pity. Her mother, kneeling beside Giselle, loosens her hair. But, in a new fit of despair, she flings up her head and arms, only to collapse afresh. The company watch Giselle's movements with mingled pity and horror.

Giselle, rising with difficulty to her feet, her reason gone, wanders slowly in a circle, then, coming down the centre of the glade, she pauses, placing first one hand then the other over her eyes in a gesture of bewilderment. She then makes a vague, appealing gesture first with one hand, then with the other, and walks to one side, where it is evident from her actions that uppermost in her confused thoughts is the memory

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of the dawn of her love for Albrecht. Kneeling, she picks an imaginary marguerite, and begins to detach the petals, whispering "he loves me, he loves me not."

Staggering to her feet, she walks slowly in a circle, her arms hanging listlessly at her side. As she again arrives at the centre of the glade, her foot comes into contact with Albrecht's sword, which still lies where it had fallen. With an unexpected exultant gleam in her eyes, she seizes the sword near its point and backs slowly, trailing the hilt over the ground; the on-lookers recoil in horror. Then, lifting the sword from the ground, with a sudden movement she forces the sword-point into her breast. Albrecht, who till then has remained motionless with apprehension, hurries forward to take the sword from her, but too late. Giselle falls into her mother's arms. Albrecht, passing behind them, gives the sword to a huntsman standing near by.

Giselle struggles from her mother's arms and runs to attack Bathilde. The Prince raises his arm to protect his daughter, but Giselle never reaches her objective. Halfway across, she turns back to her mother, while the Prince with Bathilde and her ladies slowly depart.

Giselle turns to Albrecht and invites him to dance. He hastens to her side, only to realise from her dazed expression that he has become a complete stranger to her. But Giselle, fondly imagining that she is dancing with her lover as of old, falters through that familiar phrase of steps, with a beckoning movement of her trembling hand.

Now the familiar melody of the step she danced with her lover echoes in her bemused brain. After listening intently to this phrase, she then pitifully tries to dance the accompanying step. Her movements become weaker and weaker as her strength ebbs away. Alarmed by the icy coldness that is stealing over her, she stumbles along the fringe of frightened onlookers, looking for someone to help her. She staggers towards her mother and falls at her feet. Her mother, overcome with grief, kneels beside her daughter and tries to soothe her. Giselle half raises herself, then beckons to Albrecht.

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He comes and kneels close to her, when she gently touches his cheeks in token of loving forgiveness and falls back—dead. During this scene the bystanders, deeply stirred, draw near the tragic figure of their dying friend.

Albrecht raises Giselle's arm, but realising that she is dead, allows it to fall back. Hilarion, who is in the centre of the crowd, offers up a fervent prayer. Albrecht, catching sight of the gamekeeper, drags him to face Giselle's lifeless body, bidding him gaze on his handiwork, then hurls him aside. Hilarion falls to the ground. Albrecht snatches his sword from the huntsman to whom he had confided it, and lifts it in the air to cut down Hilarion, but again Wilfid springs forward and stays his arm. Albrecht drops the sword, and, pushing his squire aside, kneels once more beside his dead sweetheart. The onlookers draw closer in varied attitudes of sorrow, some standing, some kneeling. The men doff their caps.

The curtain falls on a stage where all action is stilled.

Act II. A forest-glade on the banks of a pool.

To the left stands a cross bearing the name: Giselle, which marks her simple resting-place.

It is midnight and an occasional gleam of moonlight shows a sullen threatening sky. By Giselle's grave the dim figure of a man is seen struggling to his feet. It is Hilarion. Pushing aside his tangled hair, he gazes apprehensively about him. Suddenly there is a flash of lightning followed by the dull rumble of thunder. Hilarion hurries from the ill-omened clearing.¹

A white-veiled phantom moves swiftly across the background. A little later the ghostly figure, now unveiled, enters the glade and is seen to be a woman in a white diaphanous dress. It is the dreaded Myrtha, Queen of the Wilis. She dances about the glade, vanishes, and returns with two branches, with which she consecrates the mystic grove to the

¹ In this production the scene of the huntsmen dicing is cut.

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unholy rites about to take place. Then she summons her subject Wilis.

Veiled Wilis, also clad in white, their arms crossed over their breast, enter simultaneously from both sides. They advance to face the Queen, who commands them to retire and remove their veils.

They exit and return without their veils. The Queen bids them dance and then exits. The dance ends with the Wilis grouped in three lines parallel to the audience, all looking towards the cross. The Queen returns bearing a branch of myrtle, during which the Wilis form a line at either side. Then the Queen walks towards the cross and extends the magic branch over the tomb, when Giselle emerges from her grave, her eyes closed and her arms crossed over her breast. Giselle walks slowly towards the Queen who plucks off her veil. As Giselle's face is bared, she opens her eyes, and curtseys low. The Queen sets a gleaming star above the new sister's brow, touches her shoulders with the branch and bids her dance. Giselle, feeling life once more pulsating in her icy veins, expresses her joy in a bewildering succession of turns. The Queen bids the Wilis leave the glade, retiring with them.

Enter Albrecht, cloaked and carrying a sheaf of lilies. Heartbroken and in despair, he walks about the glade. Then he espies Giselle's grave and goes toward it.

Wilfrid enters in search of his lord. Seeing the Duke near the grave, he raises his hands in horror.

Albrecht now throws back his cloak and doffs his cap. Then he places the lilies on the grave and in utter despair falls to his knees. Wilfrid, fearing for his lord's reason, touches him on the shoulder and implores him to leave the ill-omened glade. He rises and bids Wilfrid begone. Albrecht, now alone, kneels before the grave and prays.

Giselle appears from behind the cross. Conscious of her presence, Albrecht looks up, but already she has vanished. He rises, wanders towards the centre of the glade, seeking the vision. Giselle returns, and, as she passes him, he attempts

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to catch her as she bounds in mid-air, but in vain. Despondent, he prays that the vision may remain with him.

Giselle re-enters then, looking towards Albrecht, tip-toes behind him and touches his shoulder. He looks up in amazement and passes his hands lightly over her skirt, as if to assure himself of her existence.

Giselle and Albrecht now dance a few steps together, then all at once she vanishes into the woods. Albrecht, surprised at her disappearance, searches for her near the grave. She reappears at the opposite corner and runs to pluck two lilies, with which she dances, supported by Albrecht. Then she crosses the glade with a series of diagonal bounds, tossing first one then the other of the lilies over her shoulder to Albrecht, who follows in swift pursuit. They disappear into the woods.

Enter Hilarion running and looking fearfully over his shoulder. Suddenly bands of Wilis successively appear and bar his every path to escape. Hemmed in, he is finally seized by the Wilis who begin a delirious dance, Hilarion being forced to join in and passed from group to group.

As the two ends of the circle are flung back so that the dancers form a single line, the Queen enters. Hilarion, espying the Queen, runs to her side and falls at her feet, imploring her clemency, which she coldly refuses. As he turns away, he is whirled down the line of Wilis and pushed off into the fatal pool.

The Queen and her Wilis celebrate their victory in a triumphant dance, then vanish into the wood in search of other victims. It is not long before Albrecht is discovered by some of the Wilis. Giselle, alarmed for her lover's safety, bids him stand in the shadow of the cross, which is a sure sanctuary. She begs Myrtha to spare her lover, but the Queen is pitiless. Indeed, she selects the cruellest of all weapons in the feminine armoury. She will play on Albrecht's love for Giselle in order to lure him from the protection of the cross, when, once within her magic circle, she can destroy his will and drive him into the deadly pool.

Myrtha commands Giselle to dance and to put forth her

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most seductive movements. So Giselle is faced with the terrifying ordeal of having to obey the Queen's commands, in which she herself becomes the chosen instrument of her lover's destruction, while, at the same time, she must do all in her power to keep him within the protective influence of the cross, on which his life depends.

But the torture of being separated from his beloved is too much for Albrecht. He leaves his sanctuary and bounds towards Giselle and shares in her dances. But the incessant activity which makes no demands on Giselle the phantom begins to tell on Albrecht the mortal, whose breath comes in short gasps and whose legs seem unable to support him. He beseeches the Wilis to spare him, but they refuse, and presently he falls headlong to the ground. Giselle tries to help him to rise, but failing in this, she dances alone.

Albrecht, impelled by the relentless power wielded by Myrtha, painfully struggles to his feet and attempts to continue his dance, only to collapse again. Once more Giselle entreats the Queen to spare Albrecht, only to be coldly refused. As Giselle returns to her lover's side, she again beseeches the Queen to spare her lover.

But now the first rays of dawn invade the dark glade and Giselle realises that the power of the Wilis is quickly drawing to an end. A distant bell strikes the hour of four. Immediately all the Wilis, the Queen last, go slowly toward the cross, repeating the same movements of invocation as those made previous to Giselle's first emerging from the tomb. Meanwhile, Giselle, kneeling behind Albrecht, tenderly supports his head on her knee. The Wilis slowly vanish into the wood.

As the Wilis leave, Albrecht struggles slowly to his feet, Giselle supporting his outstretched arms. Then with a resigned gesture of infinite sadness she attempts to draw away from him, but he restrains her. As she nears the edge of the wood, she collapses in his arms. He carries her to a bank where he gently sets down the expiring Giselle. The surrounding flowers and grasses raise their heads and the graceful

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phantom, one white arm raised in a farewell gesture, disappears once more into the cold earth. Albrecht, overcome with anguish at this parting, staggers a few steps, then falls to the ground.

Enter a small group of huntsmen led by Wilfrid who hurry to Albrecht's side and gaze with compassion on the pale features of their unconscious lord. The curtain falls.



Giselle has the unique distinction of being the only ballet which can claim to have been performed more or less continuously in one State Theatre or another for over a hundred years. Moreover, the greater part of the music composed for it has been retained, together with a considerable portion of the original choreography.

That a ballet should have endured for a century or more, triumphantly surviving so many vicissitudes of taste and fashion, is a sufficient tribute to its popularity and wide appeal. There is no other ballet which in the short space of two acts offers such an immense range of expression to the *ballerina*, both as dancer and mime. Indeed, taken all in all, *Giselle* was and remains the supreme achievement¹ of the Romantic Ballet.

Giselle was first performed at the Paris Opera on June 28th, 1841, the roles of Giselle and Albrecht being taken by Carlotta Grisi and Lucien Petipa respectively. The music of *Giselle* is not remarkable, but it is appropriate to the action and contains many tuneful melodies, well suited to the dance.

There is an element of romance in the origin of the ballet. Théophile Gautier has himself recorded how he came to write it. He was reading for review a book by Henrich Heine, entitled *De l'Allemagne*, when he came across a description of the legend of the Wilis, affianced brides who having had the misfortune to die before their wedding-day, are so consumed with a passionate desire to dance, that they rise up from their graves at midnight and haunt the highways until dawn, in the hope

¹ For a detailed study of the history and choreography of this ballet, the reader is referred to the writer's book, *The Ballet Called Giselle*.

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of luring any young man they may meet to dance with them until he falls dead. On reading this, Gautier exclaimed: "Wouldn't this make a pretty ballet?"

He secured the collaboration of Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges, a well-known playwright of the period, and in a short while the synopsis of the ballet was not only completed, but accepted for production by the director of the Opera. The theme of *Giselle* is unique and ideal because its mainspring is *the dance*. The many strange and varied incidents which make up the story of the ballet are all the outcome of Giselle's passion for *the dance*.

The choreography was the work of two persons, Jean Coralli and Jules Perrot. The former was the *maître de ballet* to the Opera and a choreographer of resource and talent, but Perrot, who composed all the dances for Giselle herself, was not only the greatest male dancer of his time, but a choreographic genius, a real poet of the dance.

Viewed from a technical aspect, *Giselle* is composed of two elements—dancing and mime. In the first act, the mime consists of (a) short mimed scenes in the Italian tradition, and (b) episodes in which the mime is fused with the dancing. In the second act, the mime is an integral part of the dancing.

The number of movements, steps and poses used is comparatively small, but they are employed in masterly fashion, not only to provide an aesthetically pleasing composition, but also to express the development of the action and the varied situations that arise. This calculated simplification is doubtless employed to attain the utmost expressiveness, but this very simplicity concentrates critical attention on the dancers and demands from them the highest degree of technical execution and style, which must also achieve the suggestion of spontaneity.

I have referred to the expressiveness of the dancing, two examples will serve to illustrate this point. Note, for instance, in the first act, when Giselle and Albrecht express their mutual love in a *pas de deux*, that they waft silent kisses to each during a *posé en arabesque*. Similarly, in the second act, Giselle

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throws her lover a flower while bounding in a *grand jeté*. This soaring step is used to suggest Giselle's phantom-like swiftness and lightness, and when the throwing of the flower coincides with the highest point of the leap, an extraordinary effect of ecstasy is achieved.

Another unusual feature of *Giselle* is the use of what might be termed choreographic *Leitmotiv*. During the waltz in the first act, when Giselle and Albrecht dance together surrounded by their friends, at one time they dance a certain phrase of steps, each making a beckoning movement with the raised arm. Later, when Giselle has lost her reason, and believes herself still dancing with her beloved, the choreographer makes Giselle repeat the same phrase of steps, which is now danced slowly and jerkily to indicate the conflict between her mind and her limbs, and evokes a profound feeling of pity in the spectator.

The second act demands phantoms, dancers who suggest that they are intangible spirits, wisps of wreathing mist, not merely agile young women dressed in ballet skirts. Observe that the whole of this act is *danced* from beginning to end, and balanced ideally between the poles of expressive dancing and danced mime. In no other ballet are the intermingled themes of the love of man for woman and the conflict between inexorable duty and the power of love treated with such refinement, lyricism, and delicate appreciation of the issues involved. This act, danced by artists, can be a genuine choreographic poem.

Another unusual feature of this second act, is the manner in which the dancing of the *corps de ballet* and soloists is combined to form one whole. The *corps de ballet* is never employed as a mere decorative background, but as an integral part of the ballet, sometimes dancing apart, sometimes dancing with the principals, but always making an essential and vital contribution to the choreographic design and to the development of the action. This is the plan which was so successfully imitated by Ivanov in his choreography for the second act of *Le Lac des Cygnes*, and by Fokine in his ballet, *Les Sylphides*.



[Photo: Gordon Anthony]

SCENE FROM CASSE-NOISETTE", ACT I



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Small wonder then that to dance the title-role of *Giselle* is the lodestar, the grand design of every aspiring soloist. What other ballet affords opportunity for the *ballerina* to attempt to express in terms of dancing so many facets of human experience, from the tenderness of first love to the bitter anguish of troth betrayed, the tragedy of madness, and the sublimity of a love persisting beyond the grave?

CASSE-NOISETTE

Ballet in 2 Acts and 3 Scenes.

Music: P. I. Tchaikovsky.

Scenery and costumes: Mtslav Dobouzhinsky.

Choreography: Lev Ivanov, reproduced by Nicholas Sergeyev.

*Revived¹ with present scenery and costumes, Sadler's Wells Theatre,
London, January 8th, 1937.*

CHARACTERS

President	.	.	.	Maurice Brooke
His wife	.	.	.	Ursula Moreton
Fritz	}	their children	.	Jean Bedells
Clara	}		.	June Vincent
Drosselmeyer	.	.	.	Claude Newman
Aunt Marianna	.	.	.	Sheila McCarthy
Governess	.	.	.	Wenda Horsburgh
Butler	.	.	.	John Greenwood
Mechanical Dolls:				
Vivandière	.	.	.	Laurel Martyn
Soldier	.	.	.	Guinevere Parry
Columbine	.	.	.	Molly Brown
Harlequin	.	.	.	Don Burrows
King of Mice	.	.	.	Don Burrows
Nutcracker	.	.	.	Deryk Mendel

¹ This ballet was first revived by the "Wells" Company at the Sadler's Wells Theatre, London, on January 30th, 1934, with scenery and costumes by Hedley Briggs. The roles of the Sugar-Plum Fairy and her cavalier were danced by Markova and Stanley Judson.

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Divertissements:

Chocolat: Danse Espagnole	{ Ailne Phillips Harold Turner
Café: Danse Arabe	{ Beatrice Appleyard Maurice Brooke Leslie Edwards Paul Reyloff
Thé: Danse Chinois	{ William Chappell Michael Somes
Bouffon	{ Claude Newman Molly Brown
Danse des Mirlitons	{ Jill Gregory, Laurel Martyn ¹ Guinevere Parry, Joyce Farron ²
Pas de Deux	{ Margot Fonteyn Robert Helpmann
Variation	Robert Helpmann
The Sugar-Plum Fairy	Margot Fonteyn
Children, Guests and Parents, Incroyables and Merveilleuses, Mice, Biscuits, Soldiers, Snowflakes, Fairies.	

Act I. Scene I. Clara's Home.

A circular room in the Empire period. In the centre back a lofty opening affording entrance to an inner room, where stands a decorated Christmas-tree. To the left side of the opening is a clock on a tall pedestal; to the right, a narrow bookcase. The lighting of the room is quiet and subdued.

When the curtain rises, the President and his wife are seen taking up their positions to receive their guests. First, the children arrive in an excited mood of pleasurable anticipation. They are succeeded by the grown-ups, well-dressed ladies and gentlemen who enter slowly with a dignified bow and hand-shake to their hosts. When all the guests have arrived there are dances for the grown-ups and dances for the children.

Among the guests is a strange old gentleman, Counsellor Drosselmeyer, a mechanical genius whose sinister aspect both fascinates and frightens the children, who, on his approaching

¹ Formerly Laurel Gill.

² Afterwards Julia Farron.

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them, hide their faces in their mothers' dresses. But their fears are soon calmed and change to delight when he announces that he has brought a gift for each of the President's two children, Clara and Fritz. These presents consist of clock-work toys: a Vivandière, a Soldier, a Columbine, and a Harlequin. Having arranged them to his satisfaction, Drosselmeyer sets the toys in motion.

The children are delighted and go to take possession of their gifts, but their parents forbid them to play with such wonderful toys. Clara bursts into tears and Fritz displays signs of ill-temper. To appease them, Drosselmeyer produces another toy, a Nutcracker which he presents to Clara. Fritz, attracted by the clacking of the jaws as Clara plays with the toy, covets it. He wants to crack a nut with it, but Clara fears to risk damage to the toy. Her parents impress upon her that the toy is not hers alone, but is to be shared with her brother. So Clara, with a gesture of resignation, hands the toy to Fritz who, to her horror, promptly tests its ability to crack nuts. Then, as he forces an extra large nut into the jaws, there is a horrid sound of rending and the jaws snap. Fritz, laughing, tosses the now useless toy away. Clara, deeply grieved, rescues her precious Nutcracker, soothes it with tender caresses, and sets it down gently on a stool.

Fritz and some of his friends make fun of Clara's affection for the Nutcracker and begins to tease her. Presently the romping becomes so boisterous that the President decides to terminate the evening's festivities with the traditional round dance—the Grossvater. The dances concluded, the guests take leave of their hosts and Clara and Fritz are told that it is high time they were in bed. Clara begs to be allowed to take her Nutcracker with her, but since permission is refused, she sorrowfully withdraws with many a backward glance at the stool where rests her cherished toy.

Servants put out the lights and all is dark, except for the moonlight which steadily filters through the window, illuminating first the floor then the walls.

A faint mysterious melody falls on the ear, and Clara, who

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has been unable to sleep for thinking of her Nutcracker, comes into the room, a slight figure in her white nightdress. Half fearfully, she tiptoes across the room towards the Nutcracker's bed, over which hovers a strange fantastic glow. The clock strikes midnight and as Clara looks at the clock, she hears another sound, the scratching and squeaking of mice. Terrified, she wants to snatch up the Nutcracker and run away. But frightened at the squeakings, which grow louder and louder indicating the approach of the mice, she sinks into a chair.

The fir-tree at the back gleams with light, a smart toy soldier comes to life and stands on sentry. He challenges the advancing mice and, hearing no reply, fires his gun; this is the signal for one of those metamorphoses common to fairy-land. The familiar room becomes a battlefield, for toy soldiers spring to life and, under the command of the Nutcracker, prepare to wage war against the invading horde of mice led by their king. At first the soldiers are hard-pressed and it seems as though they will be vanquished, but Clara leaps to her feet, throws her shoe at the Mice-King, and helps her beloved Nutcracker to victory. This act of devotion causes him to be transformed into a handsome prince, who invites Clara to go with him to the Kingdom of Sweets.

Act I. Scene II. The Fir Forest in Winter.

The young lovers are seen passing through a storm of snow-flakes on their way to the Kingdom of Sweets. Soon the flakes fall faster and thicker to be whirled to and fro, then round and round in a circle.

Act II. The Kingdom of Sweets.

The backcloth depicts a fantastic structure formed of cornucopias of sweets, ice-cream cornets, gingerbread animals, and beribboned boxes of chocolates. In the far distance is a cake crowned with a miniature temple in icing sugar, flanked on either side by a row of tall jellies.

The lovers arrive from a small boat. Clara and the Prince are received by the Sugar-Plum Fairy, who commands high

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festival in their honour. This affords opportunity for a series of *divertissements*: "Chocolat: Danse Espagnole"; "Café: Danse Arabe"; "Thé: Danse Chinoise"; "Bouffon"; "Danse des Mirlitons"; a *Grand Pas de Deux* by the Sugar-Plum Fairy and her Cavalier; and a final *ensemble*.



The principal melodies of *Casse-Noisette* have long been known to the general public as a result of the popularity of the suite arranged both for piano and for orchestra.

The story of the ballet is based on Dumas's version of a tale by Ernst T. A. Hoffman, *The Nutcracker and the King of Mice*. But although the story is charming, it makes a poor subject for ballet, and notwithstanding that Petipa wrote with a flourish, "J'écris cela, c'est très bon," at the end of the synopsis of dances and mimed scenes which he prepared for Tchaikovsky, the composer disliked the theme and it was some time before he could settle down to his task. None the less, the score contains some attractive melodies such as the "Dance of the Sugar-Plum Fairy," for which Tchaikovsky made use for the first time of the celesta with its bell-like effect.

Casse-Noisette was originally produced with choreography by Lev Ivanov at the Maryinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg, on December 3rd/17th, 1892. It was revived in its entirety in this country by the Sadler's Wells Ballet at the Sadler's Wells Theatre, January 30th, 1934, with scenery and costumes by Hedley Briggs. The role of the Sugar-Plum Fairy was taken by Alicia Markova.

The opening scene radiates a mellow, old-fashioned charm which is pleasing, but the dances by the dolls and the fight between the soldiers and the mice are frankly undistinguished and only suited to a juvenile audience.

The scene of the snowflakes, an *ensemble* with the dancers habited in the traditional white ballet skirt with the dancers slowly waving branched sticks tipped with snowballs of cotton wool, is well composed and very effective in its simulation of snowflakes falling and eddying in the rough winter wind.

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The final act follows the traditional design of a ballet at this period and is really an excuse for a series of character dances, seldom appropriate to the situation and, generally speaking, of indifferent quality. And what a fantastic medley of subjects! Three dances to be inspired by such well-known beverages as chocolate, coffee and tea; a tumbler's dance; a dance of reed pipes; and an academic *Grand Pas de Deux*.

The beverage dances are frankly mediocre; the tumbler's dance, a robust Russian character number danced to a trepak rhythm, is effective; the dance of the reed pipes is commonplace. The truth is that, apart from the Snowflakes *ballabile*, there is hardly anything of real worth in this ballet, as here presented¹, until the *Grand Pas de Deux* danced by the Sugar-Plum Fairy and her Cavalier. These three dances are beautifully composed and demand first-rate artists for their interpretation to bring out their technical brilliance and the nobility of their style. The dances for the *ballerina*, when well rendered, have a sparkling, brittle, crystalline quality which suggests a moonlit tree hung with icicles tinkling and crackling in the winter wind.

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

Ballet in a Prologue and 3 Acts.

Book: Marius Petipa and I. A. Vsevelozhsky, after Charles Perrault.

Music: P. I. Tchaikovsky.

Scenery and costumes: Oliver Messel.

Choreography: Marius Petipa, reproduced by Nicholas Sergeyev.

First revived with present setting by "Wells" Co., Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London, February 20th, 1946.

CHARACTERS

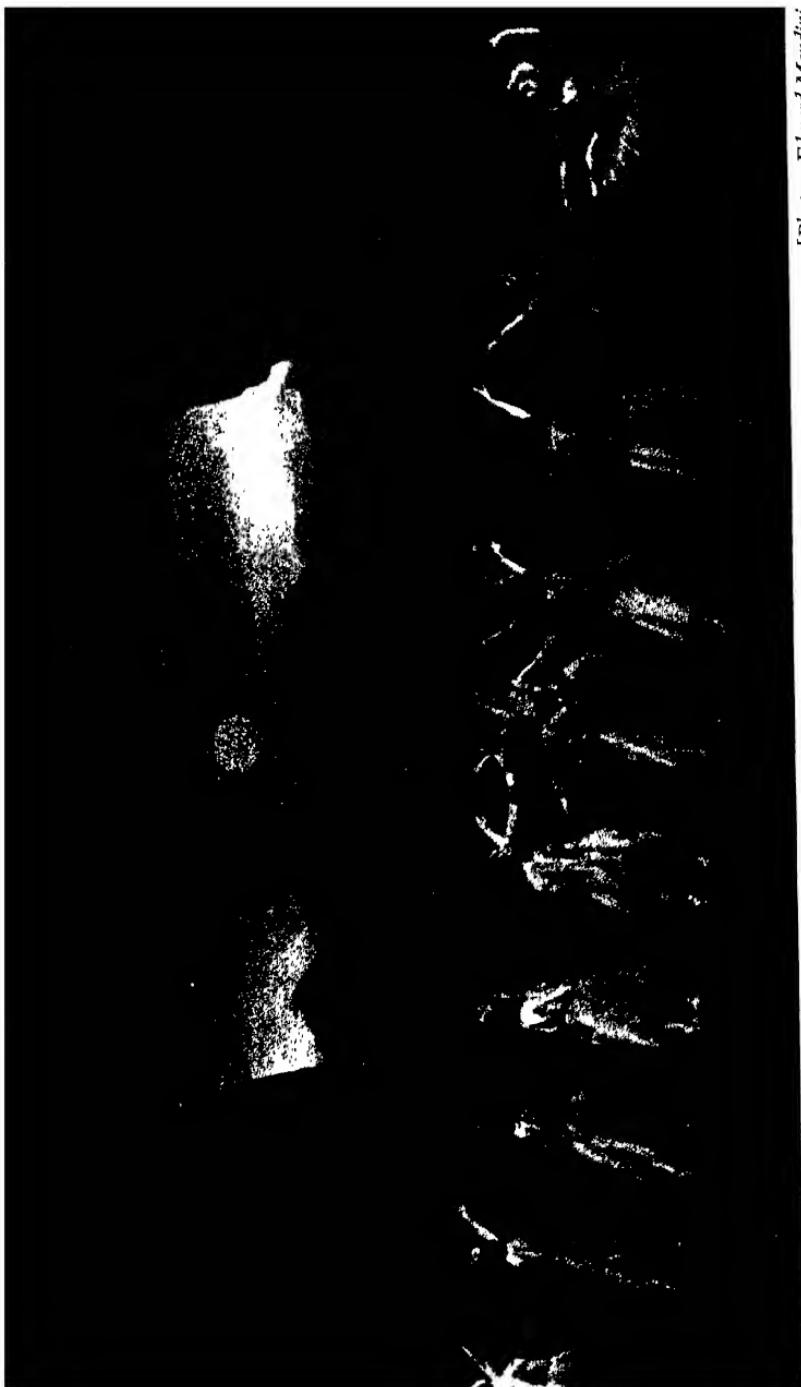
King Florestan XXIV	.	David Davenport
His Queen	.	Julia Farron

¹ Although I have not seen *Casse-Noisette* as presented by the Soviet Ballet, I am inclined to believe, from descriptions by those who have, that its choreography would differ from the version presented by the "Wells" Company.



[Photo: Edward Mandini.]

SCENE FROM "THE SLEEPING BEAUTY", ACT II



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Cattalabutte (Master of Ceremonies)	.	.	Leslie Edwards
The Fairy of the Crystal Fountain	.	.	Moira Shearer
Her Cavalier	.	.	Alexis Rassine
The Fairy of the Enchanted Garden	.	.	Gillian Lynne
Her Cavalier	.	.	Henry Danton
The Fairy of the Woodland Glades	.	.	Anne Negus
Her Cavalier	.	.	Harold Turner
The Fairy of the Song Birds	.	.	Pauline Clayden
Her Cavalier	.	.	Richard Ellis
The Fairy of the Golden Vine	.	.	Margaret Dale
Her Cavalier	.	.	Franklin White
The Fairy of the Lilac	.	.	Beryl Grey
Her Cavalier	.	.	Michael Somes
Carabosse (The Wicked Fairy)	.	.	Robert Helpmann
The Princess Aurora.	.	.	Margot Fonteyn
The First Prince	.	.	Harold Turner
The Second Prince	.	.	Anthony Burke
The Third Prince	.	.	Henry Danton
The Fourth Prince	.	.	Richard Ellis
Prince Florimund	.	.	Robert Helpmann
The Countess	.	.	Jean Bedells
Gallison (The Prince's Tutor).	.	.	Paul Reymond
A Vision of the Princess Aurora	.	.	Margot Fonteyn
<i>Fairy Tales:</i>			
Bluebeard	.	.	Norman Thomson
His Wife	.	.	Margaret Roseby
Goldilocks	.	.	Paula Dunning
Her Prince	.	.	Paul Reymond

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Beauty	Christine du Boulay
The Beast	Toni Repetto

Divertissements:

Florestan	Michael Somes
His Two Sisters	{ Moira Slicarer Gerd Larsen
Puss-in-Boots	Stanley Holden
The White Cat	Margaret Dale
The Princess Florisse	Pamela May
The Blue Bird	Alexis Rassine
Red Riding Hood	June Leighton
The Wolf	Richard Ellis
Pas de Deux	{ Margot Fonteyn Robert Helpmann
The Three Ivans	{ Harold Turner Gordon Hamilton Franklin White
Variation	Margot Fonteyn
Pages, Mice, Maids of Honour, Princess Aurora's Friends, Village Maidens, Village Youths, Duchesses, Dukes, Mar- chionesses, Marquesses, Fairies, Musicians, Ministers of State, Heralds, Huntsmen, Lackeys, etc.	

Prologue: The Christening. Period: early 17th century.

With the raising of the curtain the spectator is introduced to the terrace of the palace of King Florestan XXIV. Lofty banded columns of grey stone support the massive roof, the majestic arched embrasures affording a pleasant prospect of a well-wooded park. The cold stone is relieved by voluminous looped curtains, deep ochre and red. To the right is a raised dais, on which stands a canopied gold cradle wherein lies the royal infant, guarded on either side by a nurse in white ruff, long black dress, and gold stomacher.

Grouped about the walls are heralds in red hose and silver embroidered doublets, and in the very centre of the room stands Cattalabutte, Master of Ceremonies, wearing white

THE PRE-FOKINE BALLET^S.

hose, red and green trunks, and green and gold tunic. From his shoulders falls a white cloak. In his right hand he bears the silver wand of his office.

The trumpets blare in announcement of the arrival of the guests and the roof echoes to the strains of a pompous march. Presently a stream of arrivals is seen passing up the stairs that lead from the park to the palace. There are Court Ladies in Jacobean dresses with tight-fitting bodices and hooped skirts, coloured pink and brown, green and yellow, pale blue and beige, and scarlet and grey, their necks adorned with a ruff, their hair piled high and decked with a plume. Cattalabutte summons a herald holding a scroll of parchment, which he takes from him and examines with care.

Now the King and Queen enter, a gold canopy borne above their heads by four negro pages in blue and silver; behind them walk negro guards in yellow and white. The King wears coat and breeches of cloth of gold, and a silver corselet, while his Queen wears a pale strawberry dress embroidered in silver. The royal couple make a slow tour of the apartment while the assembly bow in homage. Their Majesties come to the cradle and while they affectionately bend over their tiny daughter, the nurses curtsey. Cattalabutte presents the scroll to the Queen who peruses the list of honoured guests. Then the King and Queen take their seats on thrones placed adjacent to the cradle.

Again a fanfare of trumpets and Cattalabutte goes towards the royal presence to announce the arrival of the fairies, who are preceded by their cavaliers. First, the Fairy of the Crystal Fountain, followed in quick succession by the Fairy of the Enchanted Garden, the Fairy of the Woodland Glades, the Fairy of the Song Birds, and the Fairy of the Golden Vine. As each fairy enters she bows low before the King, then makes her way towards the cradle. Each bends over the sleeping child and breathes upon her a magic spell. One promises that she shall be the most beautiful being in all the world; another, that she shall dance more gracefully than the most light-footed midsummer elf; a third, that she shall sing more

sweetly than the nightingale; a fourth, that she shall rival Orpheus in her playing of all instruments of music . . . so that the princess of a few months is endowed with all those coveted accomplishments to attain only one of which the ordinary mortal must toil for a lifetime.

Lastly comes the Lilac Fairy herself with her eight maids of honour. She is followed by a group of fairy pages bearing the christening gifts, which they proffer on bended knee. Each is peculiar to the donor: a crown of crystal from the Lilac Fairy, a cornucopia filled with the choicest grapes from the Fairy of the Golden Vine, a conch filled with flowers from the Fairy of the Crystal Fountain . . . each is acclaimed with delight.

The music changes to a lively measure and the attendants on the Lilac Fairy commence to dance to right and left. They advance two abreast, while their arms wreath slowly to and fro; then each pair sweeps in a circle to right and left. Arrived at the feet of the dais they form into one line and again advance with rapid movements of either foot and graceful poses of their arms. They step from side to side, then conclude in a charming group. The fairies' cavaliers spring into the centre of the hall, vault into the air, and execute an *entrechat*.

Now all the fairies spread into a single line. Behind each stands her cavalier. In turn each fairy twirls in a swift *pirouette*, after which each cavalier drops on bended knee to receive her in his arms. All rise, and are turned *en attitude*. They extend one leg forward, then draw aside from their cavaliers. The Lilac Fairy, accompanied by her cavalier, steps into the centre of the apartment, while the other fairies form a hollow square about her. Each rises *sur la pointe*, *en arabesque*, to turn slowly in the same pose, while the Lilac Fairy is raised high in the air by her cavalier, then lowered to the ground to revolve in a *pirouette*.

A sudden blast of trumpets and the *tempo* rapidly increases. Now the maids of honour to the Lilac Fairy join the cavaliers in a lively dance at the conclusion of which some maids drop on one knee, while others lean back into the arms of

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their cavaliers, after which all draw aside to enable each fairy to honour the Court with a *pas seul*.

First, the Fairy of the Crystal Fountain, who wears a pale bluish-green *tutu*, decorated in silver and gold. The music changes to a languid melody and the fairy advances slowly *sur les pointes* with her arms raised *en attitude*. She moves to right and left to pause now and again with a graceful backward pose of her head and arms. She revolves slowly in a succession of *pirouettes*, poses *en attitude*, *pirouettes* and falls to the ground on one knee with her head lowered and her arms clasped to her breast.

The theme becomes gay and lively, and the Fairy of the Enchanted Garden appears. She wears a yellow-fringed white *tutu* and bodice in vari-coloured horizontal stripes, decorated with attached scarlet flowers and green leaves. She advances with rapid bounds on either foot while the other flashes in a *rond de jambe en l'air*. Now she whirls in a series of *pirouettes*, at first slow, then quicker and quicker until the dance is brought to a conclusion.

The third dance is that of the Fairy of the Woodland Glades. To a melodious, well-marked *pizzicato* she trips quickly with neat accentuation of the rhythm, then darts forward on the left foot while the other sweeps forward at right angles to her hip. Her arms are arched above her head. Swiftly the raised leg sweeps backward and her arms are lowered *en arabesque*. With each forward bound she effects the same brilliant change of pose. Now she rises *sur les pointes* and swerves, first to left, then to right, her feet moving so quickly that one is reminded of the twittering movements of a small bird. She stops with her arms extended and one leg slightly raised.

The melody changes to a curious trilling followed by the silvery tinkle of a triangle and the Fairy of the Song Birds enters. She wears white *tutu* with the bodice shaded from yellow to fawn and decorated with tiny birds. She dances quickly to and fro with quick little nods of her head and fluttering movements of her arms.

She is followed by the Fairy of the Golden Vine. Her

costume consists of a purple *tutu*, with a wine-coloured bodice embroidered in gold. She moves with incredible speed. The *tempo* is continually accelerated while she dances faster and faster; her head jerks from side to side while the index finger of each hand is extended, withdrawn, pointed upwards and downwards, so that its path recalls the erratic movements of a bird in swift flight.

Lastly comes the Lilac Fairy, wearing a pale mauve *tutu*, with a white bodice decorated with a spray of lilac flowers and their leaves. She leaps lightly forward on one foot while the other executes a *grand rond de jambe en l'air*. She turns sideways and rises *en attitude*. Now she retraces her steps with little springs alternately on each foot, then vaults forward, varying this with occasional *pirouettes*. She then circles the stage. Arrived at the centre she rises *sur la pointe*, turns *en arabesque* and ends with a *fouetté* turn. The music is expressive of her movements. It resembles the tinkle of little bells, the liquid melody of a running brook. At the conclusion of her dance the other fairies walk to her side, and together they commence to ascend the steps leading to the cradle.

Follows a dance by the six fairy cavaliers. This consists mainly of leaps and beats of the feet. The attendants on the Lilac Fairy come forward in a long line parallel to the audience, then divide, four passing to the left, four to the right.

The King and Queen rise and descend from the dais to thank the fairies for their attendance, upon which the pages are about to come forward with the fairy gifts, when there is a sudden far-off clap of thunder. The guests gaze at each other in question at this evil omen. Again the thunder sounds a prolonged reverberating peal, this time near at hand. A herald hurries in, his features expressive of alarm and fear. The guests are apprehensive. The ladies take counsel in trembling whispers.

Suddenly the ears are pierced by a blare of discordant trumpets, followed by eerie squawks and shrill whistling, and there dashes into the great hall a sinister black coach drawn by four sleek brown mice and attended by two grey rats.

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This strange vehicle with its curved sides and high arched back is decorated with silver scroll-work. Above the coach hover four sinister vultures.

The rats assist their mistress to descend. She is an old shrivelled-up little woman, with a beak-like nose. Wisps of grey hair fall over her brow, and a few long straggling hairs sprout from her chin. Her expression is fierce and vengeful, like that of a bird of prey. She walks with difficulty, leaning on a serpent-entwined stick. She is dressed in black, the wide voluminous skirt decorated with gleaming eyes, while in its folds nestle clusters of snakes. The King and Queen, recognising the uninvited guest as the wicked fairy Carabosse, are uneasy.

She surveys the company with a malicious leer and low chuckles of ill humour. Attended by her rats, she approaches the King and inquires why she was not invited to the christening. The King refers her to Cattalabutte. When she turns inquiringly to the Master of Ceremonies the hapless official unfolds his scroll and begins to check over each name as if to repudiate her insinuation. The King, however, impatient at his fumbling, snatches the scroll from Cattalabutte, quickly scans the list of guests and, finding that of Carabosse missing, hands the scroll back to the Master of Ceremonies with an angry gesture.

Carabosse gazes fiercely at the wretched Cattalabutte and beckons to him with a grim clawing gesture of her taloned hand. In a great fright, Cattalabutte shuffles forward with quaking limbs, for the fairy grinds her teeth, bites her lips, and menaces him with a crooked and wrinkled finger. She beats the ground with fretful blows of her stick and threatens him with dreadful punishment. Terrified, Cattalabutte falls on his knees and pleads for pardon. Carabosse stoops over him and snatches off his wig, which is caught up and thrown away by the delighted rats. Again the fairy is convulsed with rage, and plucks out the few hairs which adorns his almost bare poll. Humbled in pride, he can only mumble a feeble protest at this last indignity.

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Carabosse turns from him and limps towards the dais, but before she can approach it, five of the fairies wind about their furious sister and entreat her not to harm the royal infant. She stops, then capers to and fro while the music becomes harsh and full of evil presage. The mice scamper and shuffle in her wake, brush one paw against the other, scratch their ears, comb their whiskers, and writhe their long tails. Carrabosse approaches the King and Queen and describes how each year the Princess shall grow in beauty and accomplishments. Then, changing her tone and beating the ground with her stick as she lashes herself into a vengeful rage, she cries out in a terrible voice: "But one day she shall prick her finger, and on that day she shall surely die." The King and Queen, horrified at Carrabosse's threats and fearful for their child, implore, nay, beg her pity, only to be greeted by derisive laughter.

Again, Carrabosse becomes imbued with the desire to ascend the steps leading to the cradle. As she limps forward the nurses draw back in dismay. Suddenly, the Lilac Fairy appears before the cradle and bars her passage with outstretched arms. Carrabosse recoils reluctantly before this unexpected protector. And now the Lilac Fairy speaks: "I have not yet given my wish and I will that when Aurora pricks her finger she shall not die, but fall into a deep sleep from which one day a king's son shall awaken her with a kiss." Foiled and impotent, the fairy, shaking with rage, scrambles into her coach. The mice scamper to the shafts, the two rats take their places behind. Carrabosse sweeps her arm in a furious gesture and the vehicle, rocking and swaying from side to side, dashes from the palace.

The assembly group themselves on parallel lines directed towards the royal cradle. The King and Queen rise from their thrones, then walk slowly past the foremost line and pass to the steps which lead to the park. As the royal couple depart the whole concourse of fairies, courtiers and officials extend their arms in a gesture of benediction towards the cradle containing the royal infant. The curtain falls.

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Act I. The Spell.

The second scene shows the garden of King Florestan's palace. The background is formed by a massive curved colonnade of greyish-black marble, between the columns of which may be glimpsed stretches of wooded landscape and above whose tree-tops rise the turrets of the near-by palace. In front of the colonnade, a fountain throws up a tall vertical plume of water. To the left of the colonnade is a great stone staircase built in several flights and buttressed with a wide balustrade. To the right of the colonnade are two gold chairs and above them a red canopy.

Sixteen years have passed since the fairy Carabosse cast her dread spell and the Princess Aurora has become a lovely maiden, far famed for her beauty and the manifold variety of her accomplishments. Four Princes have arrived to ask her hand in marriage. One from Poland, one from England, another from Italy, and one even from distant India. The King has decreed that high festival be held in their honour.

When the curtain rises, the garden is prepared for the rejoicings, while in the centre are four widows in black, who are passing the time by knitting stockings. The air is filled with the strains of a melodious waltz. Presently Cattalabutte enters, bows to the company, and in high good humour nods his head to the lilting rhythm. Suddenly he stops, for he has remarked the women knitting. His mouth opens wide with astonishment, for this is an infringement of the stern law made immediately after the visit of Carabosse, by which it became a criminal offence for anyone to bring needles or spindles within a mile of the palace. Cattalabutte snatches away the needles and warns the widows of the consequences of their foolish action. The unhappy culprits kneel and entreat pardon for their fault.

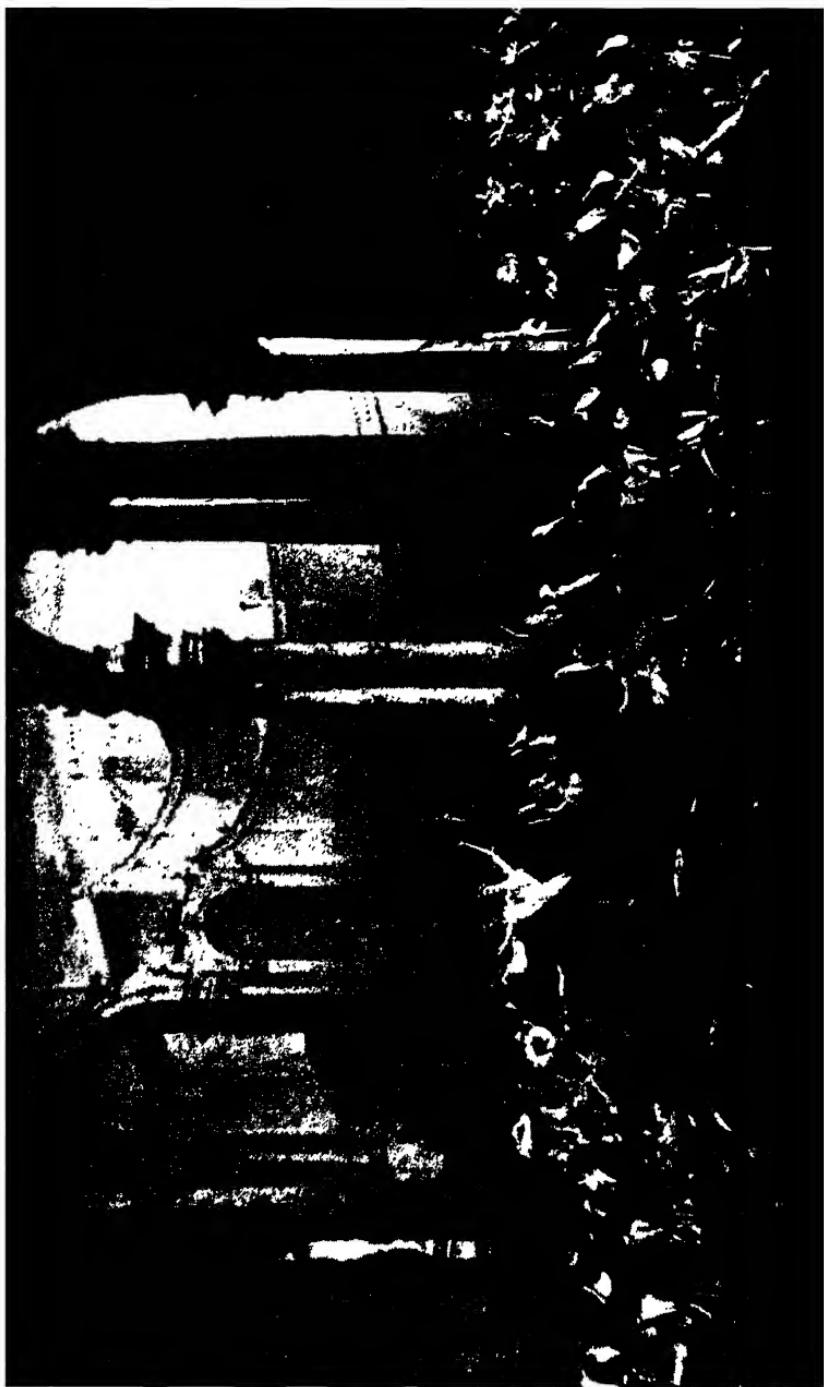
At this moment the proceedings are graced by the arrival of the King and Queen, the former in purple and gold, the latter wearing a large white hat trimmed with blue and white plumes, and a pale blue and ivory dress, with a wide hem of gold. The royal couple are attended by the four Princes and

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four maids of honour to the Princess, each of whom bears a freshly plucked rose. The Princes are all young, handsome, and richly dressed. One is attired in tunic and hose of black and gold and purple; another in green and white; a third in pale blue and white tunic, with hanging sleeves lined with scarlet, and white hose; and a fourth in pale blue tunic and red hose, with a fur baldric and cap. Behind them walk a number of lords and ladies in Caroline dress, the former in brown and yellow, the latter in blue and gold. Cattalabutte turns towards the King and, fearing for the four widows, passes the incriminating needles behind his back. Alas! the King remarks with surprise the strange disposition of his hands and demands the reason, whereupon Cattalabutte is forced to reveal the cause.

In high temper the King seizes the knitting-needles, and easily guessing the offenders by their shrinking forms, approaches them, flings the needles at their feet, and rates them soundly. He reminds them that the penalty is instant execution. The Master of the Ceremonies vainly pleads pardon for their fault, but the enraged monarch bids him be silent. In despair Cattalabutte falls on his knees before the Queen and beseeches her intercession for the lives of the villagers. The Princes, too, pray her clemency. She turns to the King and, with kindly words, so softens the royal anger that at last the penitents are forgiven. The royal couple take the seats prepared for them.

The Master of the Ceremonies, eager to dispel the note of discord that had so unexpectedly threatened to mar the rejoicings, summons the villagers to perform their Garland Dance, which they execute to the captivating rhythm of a waltz. The village maidens, wearing conical hats, green skirts with white aprons, and red and yellow bodices, enter carrying half-hoops twined with white convolvulus flowers and green leaves, which hoops are raised and lowered continuously so that a myriad winged petals appear to hover above the nodding heads, while the dancers trace a variety of figures. At the conclusion of the dance, Cattalabutte instructs





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the maidens to curtsey to their majesties, when they withdraw to form little whispering groups.

The Queen dispatches the four maids of honour in search of the Princess. Soon they run back and cross to the left where they remain in attendant pose, for the rising breeze carries the gay trilling notes of a song which betokens the arrival of the Princess. The Princes turn expectantly in the direction of the sound and swiftly there runs in the beautiful Aurora. She wears a short skirt of old rose and pale pink bodice decorated with crystal, the costume being of net and ending midway between wrist and elbow. She bursts into the garden with a succession of gay leaps and bounds, then trips to the Queen, who presses her to her breast, kisses her and lightly taps her cheek, as if in reproof of her high spirits. The King informs his daughter of the arrival of the Princes, then presents each in turn to her. They bow in deep homage and politely dispute the honour of being the first to kiss her hand.

Aurora greets the Princes with a pleasant smile and permits each in succession to assist her while she rises *sur la pointe* and turns slowly round to conclude in an *arabesque*. The maids of honour walk towards the colonnade attended by three of the Princes. Meanwhile the Princess turns to the first Prince, who supports her in a series of *arabesques*, then raises her in the air while she arches her arms above her head. Now he lowers her to the ground. The maids of honour cross over to the left, followed by the Princes, who beguile from each the rose she carries. The first Prince presents his flower to the Princess, who receives it while slowly turning round. With his assistance she continues to turn while each of the remaining Princes in turn presents his flower. She poses *en arabesque* and, with an enchanting smile at her several suitors, proffers her bouquet to the Queen, who embraces her warmly, and takes the roses from her with smiling compliments on her grace.

The four Princes entreat her to dance again. With a smile of assent she executes a series of *arabesques*, then poses with head and arms inclined backward in a graceful attitude,

pirouettes, rises *sur les pointes*, and dances in a circle. The music accelerates and she traces a broad circle with a brilliant succession of ever-quickenings *pirouettes*. The Princes stand by her friends and watch her with every sign of admiration, then, as her *pirouettes* cause her to pass in front of them, each drops swiftly on bended knee and presents her with a rose. She lightly tosses the flowers to the Queen and again turns slowly round, assisted by each Prince in turn. At the conclusion of her dance the Princes bow in deep homage.

The maids of honour, each supported by one of the Princes, break into a lively dance, which becomes more and more ecstatic, then exit, while the Princess trips in a diagonal line across the garden. A newcomer, a strange old woman wrapped in a dark cloak, enters the garden and furtively draws towards the Princess. Suddenly she produces a spindle. Impelled by curiosity the Princess snatches it from her grasp; then, like a child delighted with an unusual gift, she dances gaily the while she waves the spindle aloft. The onlookers regard her in fearful trepidation, particularly Cattalabutte, who recalls the evil threats of the angry Carabosse. The music grows louder and wilder, mingled with a frenzied thrumming of tambourines. The old woman, now seen to be Carabosse herself, extends her wrinkled finger towards Aurora with an imperative gesture.

Suddenly the Princess is conscious of a sharp pain in her finger. She flings down the spindle in disgust. The slight wound quickly grows more and more painful so that she drops on one knee, her hand pressed to her lips, her eyes dimmed with tears. The King and Queen and Cattalabutte hurry to her side and soothe and kiss her wounded hand. Slowly she rises with faltering steps, then whirls in a mad dance of hysteria which is constantly accelerated. The courtiers draw near in frightened groups. The Princess drops and swoons to the ground, inert, as if dead. Her parents gaze sadly upon her closed eyes and motionless form.

The King draws himself erect, turns about, raises his arms in a furious gesture, and demands that the person who brought

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the spindle shall be instantly secured. Hardly has he spoken when he is confronted by the strange figure in black. He raises his clenched fists as if to dash her to the ground, but, with a swift movement, she throws back her hood to reveal the sinister, malevolent visage of Carabosse. The Princes clasp their sword hilts and, in response to his command, draw their weapons and dash upon the wicked fairy. But ere they can approach, there is a blinding flash, a puff of smoke, and with a mocking laugh she vanishes into the ground. The Princes thrust vainly at the earth, then sheathe their swords. They return to the prostrate Princess and lament her fate.

A plaintive melody whispers about the trees and the Lilac Fairy glides forward from behind a pillar of the colonnade. She comforts the heartbroken parents and orders the Princess to be carried into the palace. Two of the courtiers raise the Princess in their arms and, conducted by Cattalabutte, bear her still form up the stone staircase which affords access to the royal apartments.

The Lilac Fairy follows the group as far as the first flight of steps, when she turns and waves her wand over the courtiers, who fall asleep where they stand. The Lilac Fairy descends the stairs and passes into the garden. Again she waves her wand. At her bidding foliage springs from the ground, gradually to veil the palace with a protective curtain of leaves.

Act II. The Vision.

A hundred years have passed and the action takes place at the close of an autumn day. The curtain rises to reveal a rocky gorge formed of brown rocks on which grow patches of brownish-green foliage. Through the defile can be seen a dark blue river and the pale blue peaks of distant mountains. The gorge echoes to the merry tarah-ti-rarah-ri-rarah of lustily blown hunting horns. The call is repeated again and again; now near, now far off. Presently the advance guard of the hunting party is seen approaching through the defile. First comes Gallison, tutor to Prince Florimund, and a host of guests evidently just dismounted, to judge by the riding

switches they carry in their hands. There are Dukes in brown and white, Duchesses in yellow, blue, and gold, Marquesses in pale blue and white, and Marchionesses in crimson, blue and gold. In the distance follow red-coated negro servants carrying baskets filled with provisions and bottles of wine.

Now Prince Florimund himself arrives. He wears a broad feathered tricorne and red breeches and long skirted coat, trimmed with gold; his right shoulder is crossed by a gold baldric and on his left breast glitters the star of a noble order. By his side walks a beautiful Countess in a charming rose-coloured dress bordered with lace. The gentlemen bow and the ladies curtsey in homage. One of the gentlemen sets up a small target and some of the ladies try their skill at archery. A few sightseers, villagers in red and green and peasant girls in blue dresses with white aprons and sleeves, begin to collect in little groups.

Tiring of the game, the Countess, accompanied by the more adventurous of the ladies, suggests a game of blind man's buff and prevails upon Gallison to be the hunter. They bind his eyes with a lace handkerchief, turn him round, and dare him to make a capture. Supremely confident, he staggers to and fro with widely extended arms, only to be flicked with switches and pushed and tapped with the butts so that his equilibrium is in momentary danger. Now and again two ladies glide forward, seize his arms, whirl him round and dash away before he can restrain them. Presently they form into single file and swerve to and fro, tapping the ground about his feet with their switches until he becomes incensed at his fruitless efforts. Try as he will, his merry tormentors always evade his clumsy embrace until he stumbles against one of the huntsmen, and with a shout of triumph envelops him with his arms. He is speedily convinced of his mistake and goaded to try again. This time he clutches the Prince, who bids him quit a game which is not to his humour. Profuse in apologies, Gallison tears off the bandage and angrily shakes his head in response to the wheedling entreaties of the ladies to resume the play.

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Now the Dukes and Duchesses dance. The move to and fro with graceful steps, cross and recross, join hands and conclude with a deep reverence. The Prince and Countess clasp hands and dance a spirited measure to the applause of the company. Presently the Marquesses and Marchionesses dance, and the Prince offers the Countess a cup of wine. Now everyone launches into a lively Farandole, in which the villagers join.

Again the hunting horns ring out in chorus. The gentlemen arm themselves with boar spears and, accompanied by their ladies, commence to leave in chattering groups. The Prince seems ill at ease, for he pays little heed to the languorous glances of the Countess, his head sunk on his breast in deep thought. Tiring of his neglect the Countess leaves his side and moves slowly away. A nobleman steps forward and offers her his arm, which she accepts. At the edge of the clearing she stops for a moment and regards sorrowfully the preoccupied figure of the object of her love. Gallison, who has remained to the last, approaches the Prince and informs him that he must hasten, for the hunt is well forward. The Prince brusquely bids him begone.

The light fades slowly and presently the stillness is broken by the plaintive melody which signifies the approach of the Lilac Fairy. Along the limpid waters of the pool glides a small mother-o'-pearl boat drawn by two dragon-flies secured to its prow, where stands the Lilac Fairy. The boat draws near to the bank. The Fairy steps out and goes towards the Prince. He confides to her his sense of ennui, his lack of ambition, his disgust at the daily monotony of his life. The Fairy listens with sympathy and relates to him the story of the Sleeping Beauty. He is incredulous, whereupon she offers to reveal to him the Princess in a vision. He falls on his knees and entreats her to grant him this boon.

She waves her wand and the glade is immediately peopled with fairies. They wear long skirts of palest green with pale blue bodices edged with a pattern of small green leaves. The Lilac Fairy waves her wand a second time and with a bound

there appears the vision of the lovely Aurora. The once disconsolate Prince is imbued with passion, an intense love for this ethereal creature. He strives to clasp her in his arms, but the Lilac Fairy waves her wand and two of the fairies restrain his ardour. As the vision darts away, the fairies loosen their grasp. He clasps his hands in rapture and the vision glides to his side and softly rests one hand on his shoulder. A moment later and she vanishes into the woods.

The fairies form into two parallel diagonal lines. The vision reappears and flits in and out of this gossamer avenue. The Prince follows in swift pursuit, but whenever his ardour seems about to be crowned with success, the Lilac Fairy intercepts him with a commanding flourish of her wand. In despair, the Prince wanders about this unassailable fortress until the vision comes from her hiding place and dances about the fairy ring. Now the Prince holds her fast in his arms. She sways backward and forward, then slips from his grasp and floats into the woods like a feather carried by a sudden breeze.

The fairies form into a lovely group of interlaced arms so arranged that the centre provides a natural arch. Again the Lilac Fairy waves her wand and the vision appears in the centre. She tip-toes to and fro, rises into the air, alights, winds in a seemingly never-ending series of *pirouettes*, poses, and then flees into the woods pursued by the Prince. The fairies, some standing, some kneeling, form into a single group about the Lilac Fairy. Presently the group dissolves and the fairies dance to and fro on a line parallel to the audience. The Lilac Fairy vaults into the air, alights and rebounds, the while she waves her wand with a caressing gesture over her friends. The dance ceases and the fairies vanish, all save the Lilac Fairy.

The Prince returns, disconsolate and woebegone at the loss of the enchanting vision. The Lilac Fairy comforts him and promises to take him to the palace where the Sleeping Beauty awaits the kiss of a king's son. She leads him to her little boat, steps inside, and invites him to follow. The fairy stands on the prow and as she waves her wand the boat glides slowly

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down stream. The Prince moves close to her side, fearful of losing one word of her instructions, while his eyes strain for a sight of the promised land. The scene grows darker and darker. A mist rises about the boat and enshrouds it from view.

Act III. Scene I. The Awakening.

With the raising of the curtain we see once more the leafy curtain which wraps in sleep the palace and court of Florestan XXIV. Although the light is dim, it is possible to see the Lilac Fairy, her wand upraised, passing slowly before the palace. She turns and signs to the Prince, who follows in her wake. As the Lilac Fairy waves her wand, the scene partly lightens and it becomes possible to see the vague silhouettes of the two figures threading their way into the palace. The outlines of columns emerge from the misty background, a blush of light glows and expands, to reveal a great bed upon which lies a veiled figure. The Prince wonderingly approaches the bed and, at the direction of the Lilac Fairy, draws aside the veil to reveal the charming features of the Princess Aurora, fast asleep. He gazes at her in admiration and, again at the Fairy's bidding, bends down and gently kisses the Princess, who slowly opens her eyes and greets him with a smile of happiness. The glow vanishes, the two figures disappear from sight, and now the whole scene begins gradually to lighten until the interior of the palace is revealed in all its splendour. Tall columns, some plain, some banded, support stone arches, while beyond rises tier upon tier of terraces and colonnades, linked by majestic staircases.

Act III. Scene II. The Wedding.

And now our tale draws to its conclusion in the traditional manner with the marriage of Prince Florimund and the Princess Aurora, to celebrate which happy event a great festival is to be held.

The lofty roof echoes to triumphant fanfares as the King and Queen enter, attended by courtiers walking in double file, led by a page, and with an occasional page interspersed between them.

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Cattalabutte makes a sign with his wand of office and a joyous fanfare on many trumpets heralds the guests come to honour the celebration. They are the familiar and beloved friends of childhood, and include some of the most famous characters from the pages of Perrault's collection of fairy-tales. First comes Puss-in-Boots, in emerald green coat and reddish brown-breeches, followed by the White Cat, a pink sash crossed over her right shoulder, carried on a cushion borne by four monkeys in mauve hose, brown jacket, and brown feathered hat. Then follows Little Red Riding Hood, wearing a pale blue dress with white apron and red cape, and the Wolf in a long reddish-brown coat and breeches, and orange stockings and boots. Last of all come Florestan and one of his Sisters, another Sister and a Cossack, Bluebeard and his Wife, Beauty and the Beast, and the six Fairies.

The *divertissements* begin with a *Pas de Trois* by Florestan in pink, and his two Sisters, dressed in white and gold. The dance concludes with a long and difficult solo for Florestan, followed by a *variation* for each Sister.

Now comes the White Cat. She moves with little bounds, followed by Puss-in-Boots, who walks on his hind legs. As he pursues her, she excites him with every wile of feline coquetry. She leans her head on one side, lightly paws her chin and darts away. Her suitor follows, drawing attention to his long whiskers by proudly stroking them. They circle about each other with wary steps; he pats her leg and they rub their backs together in an ecstasy of delight until the White Cat suddenly becomes irritated and scratches him. He leaps back with one trembling paw upraised in self-protection, then he attempts to clasp her waist. She scampers from view and Puss-in-Boots, with a frantic leap, bounds after her.

The music changes and the Enchanted Princess enters dressed in blue bodice, cornflower blue *tutu*, and white hose. She is followed by the Blue Bird in dark blue tunic and peacock blue hose. The former dances with quick, little steps. Now, supported by the dancer who personifies the Blue Bird, the Princess turns on one foot, the while she beats

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the raised foot against it. The Blue Bird leaps away and the Princess tip-toes forward, pirouettes, and, as her partner comes to her side, drops back over his arms. With a quick movement he lifts her upon his shoulders, then lowers her to the ground so that she falls on one knee.

Now the Blue Bird dances. He walks to the colonnade, and as the melody changes to a broad swinging rhythm, which is echoed in his movements, he traverses the apartment with great bounds. He leaps upward, his body alternately arched backwards like a strung bow or bent forward until head and legs almost meet as his feet cross in an *entrechat*. He alights, leaps again and whirls round in the air. He retraces his steps and traverses the room in a diagonal direction. Again he leaps upward, performs an *entrechat*, alights and rebounds, then travels clockwise in a semi-circle while executing a series of high *jetés en tournant*. Arriving at the centre of the stage he does a series of *entrechats-six* while the fingers of his outstretched arms flutter in semblance of the wings of a bird.

The Princess returns and dances slowly in a series of *arabesques*. She pirouettes, dances quickly *sur les pointes*, and falls on one knee with one hand raised gracefully to her lips.

The Blue Bird again crosses the hall, this time in a series of *brises volés*. The Princess whirls in many *pirouettes*. Now the two dancers unite in a *pas de deux*. They move with quick short leaps on a diagonal line so that they hover forward, retreat slightly, and go forward again. The Princess runs off. The Blue Bird whirls in the air, alights, and with a single bound disappears from sight.

Four monkeys dressed as pages walk in carrying short trees with broad leaves. They set them down on the ground then sit concealed behind them. These trees provide the forest *mise en scène* for the episode of little Red Riding Hood. Presently, basket on arm, she trips through the forest. She sets her basket on the ground and steps to and fro. The measure is accelerated and suddenly a Wolf bounds to her side. Terrified, she runs about the trees, but the Wolf lies

in wait and suddenly confronts her. He threatens her with a fierce gesture of his forepaws. She points behind him and he turns his head to ascertain the reason. At the same moment she darts away, stops to retrieve her precious basket, when alas, the Wolf, quickly undeceived, springs upon Red Riding Hood and, despite her struggles, carries her off.

Now Princess Aurora and Prince Florimund come forward to dance a *Pas de Deux*, one of the most famous compositions in the classical repertory. It is a supported *adage* designed to display the ballerina's poise, elegance, and beauty of line, these qualities being contrasted with spectacular "lifts" and *pirouettes*.

Hardly have the royal dancers drawn aside when there is a burst of lively music and at the back of the great hall there dance in the three Ivans, following one behind the other. Ivan wears short baggy trousers, striped red and white, blue fur-trimmed caftan, and white top boots. His brothers are dressed in red trousers, purple caftans, and black boots. They dance with fierce stamps and twists of the feet and swift jerks of their bodies. When the leader is halfway across the hall, the other two converge upon him to form a triangle, then all dance rapidly forward towards the audience, the central figure setting the pace with one series of steps, while the dancer on either side dances with a different but related sequence of steps, alternately closing in upon, or separating from, the central figure. The dance continually accelerates until suddenly the dancers squat on their haunches and propel themselves forward with sharp kicks of the feet. Then, with a swift leap, they form into a concluding group.

Again the Princess Aurora glides to the centre of the hall to dance a *variation* to a violin solo which capriciously changes from singing melodies to plucked notes echoed by her fluent turns and crisp *pointe* work.

As the Prince comes forward to congratulate the Princess, the music changes to a lively Mazurka in which the ladies and gentlemen of the Court take part. Now all the folk of fairyland join in—Florestan and one of his Sisters; the Cossack leader with Florestan's other Sister; the White Cat and

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Puss-in-Boots; Red Riding Hood and the Wolf; the Blue Bird and the Enchanted Princess; each pair dance a few characteristic steps from their particular numbers. They are followed by Cinderella and Prince Goldilocks, Beauty and the Beast, and Bluebeard and his Wife. They swing into line and accent the rhythm of the music with fierce stamps of the feet and upward fling of the arms. The lighting of the foreground grows a little darker, while that of the background becomes more and more radiant as the fairies enter and line the terraced walk, to grace the wedding festivities with their presence. The Prince and Princess walk together towards the fairies and greet them, then, as the royal couple turn to face the vast assembly, courtiers, officials, pages, kneel as one in homage.



La Belle au Bois Dormant, or *The Sleeping Beauty*, to use the name by which the ballet is known in this country, was first produced at a Gala Rehearsal at the Maryinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg, on January 1st/13th, 1890, with a cast including Carlotta Brianza (*Princess Aurora*), Marie Petipa (*Lilac Fairy*), Pavel Gerdt (*Prince Charming*), and Enrico Cecchetti, who played both Carabosse in the prologue and first act, and danced the Blue Bird in the last act.

The ballet was first presented in London by Serge Diaghilev, under the title, *The Sleeping Princess*, at the Alhambra Theatre on November 2nd, 1921, with scenery and costumes by Léon Bakst; the Petipa choreography being reconstructed by Nicholas Sergeyev, with some additional dances by B. Nijinska. This still remains the most superb production of any ballet in my experience, and the cast included at one time or another during its run, six *prime ballerine* alone—Mmes. C. Brianza, L. Egorova, L. Lopokova, B. Nijinska, O. Spessiva, and V. Trefilova. It is interesting to note that the Aurora of the 1890 production took the part of Carabosse in the revival, while at one special performance, that of January 5th, 1922, Cecchetti celebrated his stage jubilee by playing, for one night only, his original role of Carabosse.

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Of the two English productions, the Sadler's Wells version follows more closely in matters of choreography the 1890 presentation, for the Diaghilev edition omitted several numbers, replacing them partly by dances from "Casse-Noisette," and partly by quite new compositions. Again, the first Sadler's Wells revival of 1939 was set in the reigns of Henri IV and Louis XIV as prescribed by Petipa; Diaghilev transferred the action to the periods of Louis XIV and XV.

The theme of the ballet is, of course, derived from *La Belle au Bois Dormant*, the charming fairy tale by Charles Perrault (1628-1703), the story known to children as *The Sleeping Beauty*. This tale was used as a basis for a ballet as long ago as 1829 by the French choreographer, Jean Aumer, the music being by Hérold. Some features are common to the plots of both ballets.

The Sleeping Princess is regarded as Petipa's supreme achievement. Petipa, at one time assistant to Perrot, and for so long a faithful disciple of his romantic ideals, began, at this later stage in his career, to associate himself with Court ideals, perhaps as a result of the flattering support and help he received from I. A. Vsevelozhsky, Director of the Imperial Theatres from 1881-1899. The Court regarded Ballet first as a means of extolling the virtues and power of the reigning monarch, and secondly, as a source of gay and spectacular entertainment, a relief from official ties and political worries. What could be more natural then than to choose a subject in which Le Roi Soleil, disguised as Florestan XXIV, figures so prominently.

From the viewpoint of dramatic interest, the theme is not strong enough to be spread over four acts, which means that there are times when the dances seem to be imposed on the work, rather than issue from it. Petipa's ballets were first worked out in the greatest detail on paper. Consider, for instance, the very elaborate suggestions which he drew up for the guidance of Tchaikovsky, commissioned to write the music. Not only is the action described in great detail, but even the character of the music required for each dance, and the tempo and number of bars.

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Tchaikovsky took some two months to compose the score for this ballet. He began to work on it in December, 1888, and by January 18th/30th, 1889, had roughed out the whole four scenes. This ballet was his favourite, but curiously enough, the Court displayed little enthusiasm for the work, with its lovely melodies, triumphant marches, and sparkling silvery music which almost cries out to be danced to. But the ballet soon became a great favourite and to-day in Russia it shares pride of place with *Le Lac des Cygnes* and *Giselle*.

Petipa's ballets consist of elaborate marches, mimed scenes, *ensembles* and *divertissements*. Few choreographers can equal Petipa in the creation of mass dances which he built up with the use of appropriate decorative properties such as baskets of flowers and flower-festooned hoops in the "*Valse des Fleurs*," riding whips in the "*Dances of the Barons and Baronesses*," and so on. They have a variety of figures, attractive steps, and pleasing arm movements, which make the whole effect exhilarating to watch. Sometimes these *ensembles* are introduced to rest the principals, sometimes combined with them; sometimes they are used to provide a conclusion to an act or to the complete ballet, for instance, the "*Mazurka*" in the final act, when he brings on the dancers of the *divertissements* each dancing a few characteristic steps to remind the audience of their particular numbers.

One of Petipa's great contributions to the development of the Imperial Ballet was an incessant attempt to develop technique, inspired by the feats of the Italian *ballerine*, invited to appear as guest artists. Dances based primarily on academic technique or *demi-caractère* numbers were invariably devised by Petipa to suit a particular dancer, whom he engaged for the particular dance he had in mind, so that he could exploit to the full her special qualities. These dances therefore lose much when danced by other dancers who lack the particular abilities of the creator of the role. Similarly, the same dance acquires a new and unexpected quality when the interpreter's abilities resemble those of the original dancer.

The *variations* of the fairies in the prologue are admirably

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composed dances, which not only require faultless technique but hair-trigger timing. They also demand a refined style, a noble bearing, and a certain *savoir faire* which appears inherent and not obviously put on for the occasion.

Petipa seems to have been less successful in the composition of dances for the male dancer, who, after Perrot, had gradually declined in favour. At this period the Russian Court was prejudiced against male dancers, except in character numbers, and so he became reduced to the status of cavalier, a person to present and partner the *ballerina*, or to hold and lift her in supported *adage* or double work.

It was Enrico Cecchetti, at this time one of the most brilliant dancers of his day, who rebelled against this thrusting aside of the male dancer and persuaded Petipa to compose the "*Blue Bird*" *Grand Pas de Deux*, one of the most stirring of Petipa's compositions, in which the male dancer has a prominent role. The dance is cast in the traditional four-part form: an *adage* for two, girl's *variation*, man's *variation*, and *coda*, which last is an exhibition of virtuosity gradually increasing in *tempo* towards a climax which brings the whole to a triumphant conclusion.

The character dances in the final act include several admirable compositions, for instance, "*The White Cat and Puss in Boots*," "*Red Riding Hood and the Wolf*," and the already mentioned "*Blue Bird*" *pas de deux*. It is of interest to note how the character of each role is conveyed by the use of a few steps only. For instance, the *pas de chat*, combined with endearing movements of the arms and shoulders, allotted to the two cats; the little run on tip-toes which is used to suggest Red Riding Hood's terror; and the *brisés volés* and *cabrioles* by which the Blue Bird is made to seem to fly through the air. These few steps, artistically combined with appropriate movements of the arms, head and body show the touch of the master; they are like the few deft lines by which Utamaro suggests a beautiful woman.

The Sleeping Beauty was first presented by the Vic-Wells Ballet under the title, *The Sleeping Princess*, at the Sadler's

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Wells Theatre, on February 2nd, 1939, the choreography being reconstructed by Nicholas Sergeyev after his stenochoreographic record of the Petipa production.

The ballet found great favour with the general public, but the settings and costumes designed by Nadia Benois lacked the brilliance which this work demands. First, because the settings were gloomy rather than splendid, and, second, because considerations of finance had severely limited the choice and quality of the materials.

The latest revival, with which the Sadler's Wells Ballet re-opened the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, closed since the beginning of the Second World War, was given new costumes and settings by Oliver Messel. The costumes of the Prologue suggest the Jacobean mode, those of the later scenes follow Caroline fashions.

As a spectacle the latest production is a great improvement on the 1939 version. The palace scenes, inspired in part by the paintings of Watteau and the baroque stage designs of Stefano di Bologna are grandiose in style but rather low in tone, doubtless to set off the colour of the costumes. Many of these are charming, some less so. Broadly speaking, the more static roles have been better served than the soloists, certain of whose costumes, charming when seen at close quarters, are less effective at a distance. Miss Fonteyn has a charming dress for her first entrance as the Princess Aurora, unfortunately the gauze sleeves, with their tendency to billow and twist, detract from the grace of her *ports de bras*.

The principal attraction of the Prologue is the six *variations* of the fairies. These dances are models of academic choreography, where every step, every movement of the head and arms, and the phrasing of each have been designed to achieve the most brilliant effect. Danced as they should be danced, these dances have a quality which converts the interpreters into so many divinities honouring the King and his consort with a glimpse of their magic. This effect is seldom achieved by the present interpreters of the fairies' *variations* which lack that particular combination of grace, style, nobility of manner,

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and brio which Petipa's classical *variations* demand. Again, the numbers appear to have been edited and not to their advantage.

In Act I, Petipa's lovely "*Villagers' Dance*," with its floral garlands and baskets of flowers, has been replaced by a new "*Garland Dance*" arranged by Ashton. The dance is pleasing and well arranged, but not I think an improvement on the original number.

The "*Spindle*" episode, once so dramatic, is not well contrived. In the 1921 Diaghilev production, Carabosse, disguised in a black cloak, sidled nearer and nearer to the Princess allowing her glimpses of the spindle beneath her cloak until the Princess, overcome with curiosity, almost snatched it from her and joyfully danced with her prize. In the present version Carabosse merely walks forward and hands the Princess the spindle much as a postman might deliver a letter.

In Act II one misses the panorama with which this scene should properly conclude. In the Diaghilev version this afforded a charming illusion of the Prince and the Lilac Fairy floating down stream in the mother-o'-pearl boat towards the palace of the Sleeping Princess while the mist slowly descended finally to blot them from view. In the present production the music is played as an entr'acte.

In the final scene, the "*Grand Pas de Deux*," following the example of the Diaghilev production, is succeeded by a character *Pas de Trois*, "*The Three Ivans*," arranged by Ashton. It lacks the robust humour of the original dance devised by Nijinska, with its interplay between light and heavy movement and its exciting succession of jumps taken leap-frog fashion, for Ashton's dance is conceived in a lighter mood. But it is an attractive arrangement of Russian character steps, adroitly used to develop a mounting excitement.

The latest revival is dominated by Miss Fonteyn's admirable dancing as the Princess Aurora, her contribution to the final "*Grand Pas de Deux*," with its many and varied difficult lifts, being particularly brilliant.



[Photo: John T.]

SCENE FROM "LES SYLPHIDES"

Photo: John T.

Scene. A sylvan glade; on one side rises the grey ruins of a church, on the other a little group of trees, while in the centre background the outline of a tomb emerges faintly. The scene is dark except where the moonlight sheds its radiance.

When the curtain rises we see the *corps de ballet*, a shimmering mass of white, grouped in a semi-circle; in the centre are the four dancers who will dance the *variations*.

The dancers are dressed in the traditional ballet skirt of the period of Taglioni, the edge of the skirt reaching midway between ankle and knee, while their hair is adorned with a little fillet of white flowers. Silvery wings are attached to their backs. The effect of these floating white clouds against the cold atmosphere of the scene reminds one of snowflakes whirled hither and thither by the wind in the moonlight of a winter's eve. At other times they resemble clouds of mist, the surf on a breaking wave, and perhaps best of all a little band of winter fairies at play beneath the waning moon in the shadow of a frosted glade.

Apart from the first mazurka, all the dances breathe an intense sadness, save only the last which is full of rapture, a joy of quick movement; and just as the spectator feels he must join in to free himself from the intense strain on his emotions, the curtain falls.



The idea of arranging a ballet to Chopin's music came to Fokine when, on turning over some pieces at a music-seller's, he found a *Suite* called *Chopiniana*, orchestrated by Glazunov. It consisted of four pieces—a *Polonaise*, *Nocturne*, *Mazurka* and *Tarantella*. To these Fokine decided to add a *Valse*, which, at his request, Glazunov also orchestrated.

The ballet was first presented under the title of *Chopiniana* at St. Petersburg on March 8th/21st, 1908, the dancers being members of the Imperial Ballet. This production consisted of a number of unrelated episodes, for instance, the *Polonaise*

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was danced by artistes in Polish costumes. Only one number, the *Valse*, was a purely classical *pas de deux*. This was such a success that a second version of *Chopiniana* was prepared, being danced on this occasion by student dancers at a Pupils' Display on April 6th/19th, 1908, when the original production was transformed into a purely classical ballet. The original selection of pieces was also changed, the music for which was orchestrated by Maurice Keller. When in 1909 Diaghilev took his company to Paris to introduce Russian Ballet to Western Europe, Alexandre Benois suggested that the old title, *Chopiniana*, should be changed to *Les Sylphides*, a name suggested by the famous ballet, *La Sylphide*.

The original setting by Benois consisted of a backcloth, cut-cloth and wings. In the present production, the two cloths are combined, thus the result leaves a good deal to be desired, both pictorially and from the view-point of lighting. The present costumes of the *danseuses* lack the charm of the original ones, the bodices being of satin instead of tarlatan, which causes them to shine.

Les Sylphides is a composition in the manner of the pure classical ballet—a series of four *variations* and a *pas de deux*, framed in two *ensembles*, one with which the ballet opens and another which brings the ballet to a conclusion. The solo numbers are linked together by a succession of plastic groups, invested with a rare poetic charm and chaste beauty, formed by the *corps de ballet*.

“All the *soli* are conceived in a spiritualised mood, with the exception of the first *Mazurka*, which is gayer in tone. The *pas de deux* is a lovely composition, the preparation for the first movement of which is made off stage, so that the *danseuse* makes her entrance as if soaring into the air, her partner supporting her at the waist in a manner which suggests that he is lightly restraining her lest she should vanish into the skies. Sometimes he clings lightly to her while she soars into the air, sometimes she descends to the earth and permits him to dance with her. The concluding *ensemble* is a gay animated movement which suggests stream uniting with stream to burst

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into a cascade at the very edge of the footlights, then ebbing backstage to return to form again the group with which the ballet opens.

"*Les Sylphides* is certainly the most poetical of ballets of the 20th century, and, perhaps, of all time. It demands faultless execution, the purest sense of line, and perfect expressiveness, timing and mood. The movement of the arms is very important in this ballet; they require to ripple with the softness and smoothness of still water set in motion by the casting of a stone. So often the ripple becomes an ugly writhing which in itself can mar the whole work. There is another lovely arm movement in the man's solo. I remember how Nijinsky, when making a *développé*, extended his arm in a caressing movement which passed over the raised leg from thigh to instep; this is rarely seen nowadays, the movement ending short at the knee. I should like to mention another blemish; some of the soloists of the 'Wells' Company have a tendency in certain positions to jerk the head back over the shoulders in an exaggerated pose which I find most disagreeable. The whole ballet is conceived in such a purity of style that any form of excess or exaggeration, which might pass unnoticed in some ballets, here strikes a note of blatant vulgarity¹."

LE CARNAVAL

Ballet in 1 Act.

Book: Michel Fokine.

Music: Robert Schumann.

Scenery and costumes: after Léon Bakst.

¹ Quoted from *The Complete Book of Ballets*.

THE FOKINE BALLET

Choreography: after Michel Fokine.

*Revived by "Wells" Co., with present scenery and costumes,
Princes Theatre, London, October 10th, 1944.*

CHARACTERS

Columbine	.	.	.	Margot Fonteyn
Chiarina	.	.	.	Pamela May
Estrella	.	.	.	Julia Farron
Papillon	.	.	.	Pauline Clayden
Harlequin	.	.	.	Alexis Rassine
Pierrot	.	.	.	Robert Helpmann
Eusebius	.	.	.	David Paltenghi
Pantalon	.	.	.	Gordon Hamilton
Florestan	.	.	.	Leslie Edwards
				Waltzers, Philistines.

As the curtain rises to the lively *Préambule*, across the scene in quick succession appear three ladies flitting gaily with the fragile grace and irresponsible air of butterflies, each hotly pursued by an enraptured swain. Now follow other couples swaying delightfully to the rhythm of the waltz. For a moment the scene is empty, then in arch retreat flees the dainty Chiarina, followed by an infatuated admirer. Vanishing, they are replaced by the spectacle of a frivolous lady in pink—the madcap Estrella—eluding the advances of a brilliantly attired young gentleman, doubly driven to distraction by the mocking smile that rewards his vain attempts to capture her. Vanishing, they are replaced by two lovers walking arm-in-arm. A stolen kiss, and they too whirl away to the mysterious realms beyond.

Suddenly the curtain parts to reveal the head of a Pierrot, the face ghastly in its pallidness and sorrowful expression. Peering anxiously from side to side, as if fearful of being seen lest one should make sport of him, he steps forth with grotesque strides. Flapping his long sleeves with a dismal air, he wanders aimlessly to and fro, opening and shutting his mouth

as if hungering for someone to kiss, while the music, now slow, halting, and melancholy, renders his thoughts aloud. Then, as it changes to joyful melody, Harlequin bounds before us. Gaily he capers about the woebegone Pierrot, now mocking him with pointed finger, now dragging him by his ridiculous sleeves, until, angered by his stupidity, Harlequin flicks him smartly with his hand, disappearing with another agile bound as Pierrot losing his balance, falls clumsily to the ground. Again the scene is occupied by gay revellers, six couples dancing merrily to the strains of the *Valse Noble*, but never a glance pert or demure, is cast in the direction of the unhappy Pierrot, and, as they pass from sight, so he drags himself away with shambling gait and listless air.

Now through the curtain glides the romantic Eusebius who, sitting on a sofa, muses on the manifold charms of his mistress, until his vision takes shape in the form of the lady herself who presents him with a rose. Enraptured, the poet springs to his feet breathing flattering allusions, embroidered with every flight of his fancy.

In a whirlwind of silk and lace comes Estrella followed by the ardent Florestan. Hesitating, he retraces his steps, then shrugging his shoulders with an air of devil-may-care he advances in a determined manner. Falling on his knees he avows his love, the mischievous coquette raising her hands in feigned horror at this unseemly proceeding. Then, relenting, she smiles archly, slips an arm into his, and away trip the happy pair.

Now follows a charming *pas de deux* between Eusebius and Chiarina, who, bearing a red rose in each hand, dances on tip-toe, while her lover follows her every movement with rapt adoration. Stretching out his arms he would embrace her, but with sorrowful gesture she slips from his grasp. Conscious of his fault he kneels in apology when Chiarina, inclining her head to his, bestows upon him a second rose, which he tenderly presses to his lips.

Enter Papillon, a vivacious lady all high spirits and fluttering

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ribbons, tip-toeing and pirouetting in a maze of varied movement, closely watched by Pierrot now wearing his conical hat. Banished is that mask of woe, for life has now a magic zest. Half concealed behind a sofa he becomes transported with the excitement of the chase. Emerging from his hiding-place, he launches in clumsy pursuit, but, elusive as the charming insect whose name she bears, she meets his hapless efforts with mocking raillery. Then, certain of his quarry, he flings down his cap; but as swiftly as it falls, so the lady flits away.

Pierrot, elated by his skill, hugs his breast in triumph. Then carefully taking up the cap, the edges held firmly together, he listens intently. Ah! can he not hear the fluttering of her wings in vain endeavour to escape? Alas, on opening the cap, he finds it empty. Useless to turn it inside out, to shake with might and main; so the spark of life dies out and his face assumes its wonted gloom.

Now come three masked ladies, Chiarina and her two friends, who with linked arms waltz merrily to and fro, when there appears Florestan in search of Estrella. Imbued with the spirit of carnival, the mischievous trio bear down upon him, inviting advances with seductive movement and ingratiating smile. Closing in a circle and dancing round him, they increase his embarrassment until, blushing furiously, he slips through their arms and hurriedly takes his departure.

As the music changes to a slow pathetic movement—*Chopin*—Chiarina tiptoes to the centre of the background, while the ladies each move to her right and left. With raised finger Chiarina beckons to one, who gliding forward receives a charming embrace. Now the other lady advances and the two slowly revolve round her. Then, again separating, they return to their previous positions and sadly pass from view.

Again the melody quickens to the lively *Reconnaissance* and with quaint little steps there enters Columbine attended by the sprightly Harlequin. How becoming is her flowing crinoline of white silk, the flounces adorned with pairs of cherries. Her features reflect an absolute abandon to merriment, eyes

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shaded softly by long lashes sparkle with fun while red lips are parted in a radiant smile. Evidently Harlequin is in her good graces, for as they bow to each other she bestows upon him a kiss. With beckoning anger and quaint nodding of the head, he beseeches her to fly away with him, but laughingly she refuses.

Brisk important footsteps announce the arrival of Pantalon, a pompous little man in fawn coat and green striped trousers, his hands encased in ridiculous green silk gloves. Twirling his carefully waxed moustache, he withdraws from his pocket a folded note which he peruses with great care and concludes by consulting his watch. In anticipation of the pleasure so soon to be his, he seats himself on the sofa, stretching out his legs. Settled to his satisfaction, he re-reads the note. While he is occupied in this absorbing pursuit, Columbine leaps on the sofa and, hiding behind his broad back, places her fingers over his eyes. Chuckling with delight, Pantalon strives to free himself from the pleasant bonds, while Harlequin creeping to his side snatches the note from his hand. Struggling to his feet, Pantalon, in his own opinion irresistible, loses no time in paying attention to the enchanting vision before him.

But the fickle lady is no easy victim and quickly retiring she repulses him with playful smacks on the cheek. Then, with graceful curtsey, she introduces him to Harlequin. Pantalon, raising his hat in a sweeping bow, extends his hand, whereupon Harlequin dexterously displays to his astonished gaze the compromising missive. Dismayed and crestfallen, he shrugs his shoulders and, waving his hands with a reckless air, claps on his hat in high dudgeon. Triumphant! Harlequin leaps high in the air tearing up the note into little pieces and flinging them to the winds.

Now Columbine, tripping after the retreating Pantalon, detains him with outstretched hand and soothes his ruffled feelings with a kiss. Harlequin bounds to her side and the trio linking arms perform a lively *pas de trois*, from which Pantalon is dismissed by a push. The merry pair continue their dance, while the mischievous and fickle Columbine

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entices the disgruntled Pantalon anew, resulting in a further *pas de trois*, from which he is ejected reeling into the wings.

To a new pizzicato motif—*Paganini*—Harlequin performs a *pas seul*, a dazzling succession of *pirouettes à la seconde* brought to a conclusion by his sinking to the ground in a squatting posture. Tenderly bending over him, Columbine assists him to rise, confessing her love with fascinating gesture, while Harlequin makes as if to take out his heart and lay it at her feet. As Columbine retires to a sofa, he sinks to the ground beside her, lost in contemplation of her beauty.

Again the room is filled with the throng of revellers, who hasten to offer their felicitations to the newly betrothed pair. Pantalon is charmingly pardoned, Pierrot may kiss her hand, and the auspicious event is celebrated by a joyful dance, interrupted all too soon by the entry of some decidedly proper-looking old dames and their consorts, come no doubt to throw cold water on the proceedings. But even the spoilsports, despite their voluble protestations, are bandied to and fro in the whirl of the dance, while Harlequin, unable to refrain from further mischief, contrives with the assistance of his fair partner to throw into collision Pierrot and Pantalon. Before they can recover from their surprise, he deftly flings the former's long sleeves around the latter, and, fastening the ends, succeeds in binding together the ill-assorted pair. As they vainly struggle to extricate themselves, filling the air with mutual recriminations, the entire company group themselves about Harlequin and Columbine in an admiring circle, in which charming group Pierrot and Pantalon reluctantly take their places.



Le Carnaval was originally produced in connection with a charity entertainment given at St. Petersburg early in 1910. It was first seen in Europe on June 4th, in the same year, at the Paris Opera, during the Diaghilev company's second season. The ballet is arranged to an orchestrated version of Schumann's well-known composition for pianoforte.

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Le Carnaval is a series of amorous scenes, alternately frivolous or sentimental, according to the nature of the characters concerned. It is a festival of joy; an evocation of pretty sentiment, light intrigue, and high spirits, seen in a Victorian mirror. Although many of the characters bear the names of famous masks of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, they have little of the robust character of the originals, being purely romanticised versions of them.

In the course of time this ballet has strayed far from the author's intentions as evinced in the original production. Then, it was a sparkling light comedy with an undercurrent of subtle humour varied with moments of pathos. But when Diaghilev revived the ballet in London in 1918, with Lopokova and Izkowski respectively as Columbine and Harlequin, in place of Karsavina and Nijinsky, the character of the ballet was seen to have changed. The old satirical humour had evaporated, to be replaced by a childlike mood.

Fokine's choreography often appears disarmingly simple, so that an attractive ballet such as *Le Carnaval*, with its popular appeal, is one of the first choices for the repertory of any ballet company. But, before embarking on such works, it is salutary to recall that nearly all Fokine's ballets were composed with artists of the first rank for their interpreters. I have seen this ballet with Karsavina as Columbine, Nijinska as Papillon, Nijinsky as Harlequin, Cecchetti as Pantalon, and Bolm as Pierrot, and I certainly do not share the opinion of some writers that the present revival has almost all the virtues of the original conception, which I venture to doubt they ever saw.

In the latest version, staged by Mme. Evina, a former member of the Diaghilev company, the childlike atmosphere is carried still further. But the touch is too heavy, the colours too crude. This ballet requires to be as fragile, as imponderable, and as iridescent as a soap-bubble. Unfortunately, these qualities are not easy to acquire, and those charming personages, Harlequin, Pierrot, and Pantalon, apparently so easy of assumption, are in reality very difficult for young

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artists, who, moreover, have not had the advantage of seeing the original production.

The mere dressing-up in a crinoline and poke-bonnet, or peg-top trousers and swallow-tailed coat, does not automatically make one a Victorian or create a Victorian atmosphere. When the particular character to be interpreted has been created in the mind, it is necessary to cultivate a sense of period and mood by studying Victorian paintings and drawings, or by reading Victorian literature, in the hope of first creating within oneself a Victorian outlook, to be infused later in the prescribed steps and gestures. The essence of all Fokine's ballets is style-atmosphere, expressiveness of movement, and the most careful timing.

Instead of this ballet being a romantic *pastiche*, it is rapidly degenerating into a romp. Columbine is far too frivolous; Harlequin resembles an excited schoolboy. Again, there is too much beckoning with the forefinger on the part of the former; too much shaking of the head by the latter. Pierrot, who is intended to portray romantic youth struggling in an unfeeling everyday world, is presented by one member of the company almost as a buffoon, whose hapless falls are used to provoke laughter, when, on the contrary, Pierrot should evoke tears of pity. It is strange also to observe how erect Pierrot stands, when his weariness and helplessness should be suggested by the figure's being slightly bent, thus presenting a curved line. As for Pantalon, the good-humoured type of *vieux marcheur*, with his fatuous self-conceit in his irresistible attraction for any woman; this mellow, amorous, well-mannered old boy has become a grim, poker-backed, irritable being far more suited to be a debt-collector.

I venture to doubt whether the choreography is complete, for there seem to be many gaps in the role of Pierrot. The scenery, too, being of painted flats instead of the original curtains, forces Pierrot, on his first entrance, to extend his leg parallel to the audience instead of at right-angles to it. Harlequin's *grand pirouette à la seconde* is incorrectly completed, the dancer executing a number of *pirouettes* after which he

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sits down. In the original version, after a brilliant series of *pirouettes*, he gradually brought in the working leg and sank on the supporting knee while turning, until he almost reached the floor and could sit on it. In the sentimental "*Pas de Trois*" by Chiarina and her two girl friends, there is no change of lighting to accentuate the sentimental mood. I mention these matters as a few instances in support of my doubt.

One more point. A kiss can provide a charming moment in a ballet, but in the present production kisses are "as plentiful as blackberries," and so what was wont to be a lovely action has now become nauseating through being carried to excess.

LE SPECTRE DE LA ROSE

Ballet in 1 Act.

Book: J. L. Vaudoyer.

Music: Carl von Weber.

Scenery and costumes: Rex Whistler.

Choreography: after Michel Fokine.

First revived with present setting by "Wells" Co., New Theatre, London, February 1st, 1944.

CHARACTERS

The Young Girl . . . Margot Fonteyn

The Spirit of the Rose . . . Alexis Rassine

Scene. A young girl's bedroom. The room, octagonal in shape, painted a uniform grey-green, relieved with panels of a darker green, suggests the Empire period. The centre back panel is decorated with a circular plaque; on the ground immediately below it is a sofa in the neo-classical style. To the left of the room there is a draped dressing-table; to the

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right, an arm-chair, and, in a recess, a bed. In the left and right back corners is a tall french window, the divided halves in each case being opened inwards to reveal a fairy-like garden, filled with flowering rose-bushes. Overhead can be seen the warm blue sky of a summer's evening, shot with the green of tree foliage. Through the open window streams the moon-light, flecking the floor with bright patches of green and yellow.

From the garden comes a gentle breeze laden with the fragrance of roses, and into the room steps a young girl, sweet and demure in her high-cut ball dress of palest green, while about her shoulders is a light wrap. In her hand she gently holds a rose, fearful lest her tiny fingers should crumple its fragile beauty. She raises it to her lips and imprints on it a loving kiss. What tender secrets does it hold, this lover's gift? She gazes upon it with downcast eyes. Surely it is not wrong to be loved? Her lips quiver and seem to murmur his name. She glances round the room, so friendly, so dear to her, with all its innocent treasures. Now that her face is upraised how tired she looks. Perhaps, little accustomed to worldly treasures, the excitement of the ball has proved too great for her. She throws off her wrap and walks slowly to her arm-chair. She sinks into it with a sigh of content, her eyes close and in a few moments she is fast asleep. Her limp hands fall and through her fingers the rose slips, caresses her dress, and glides to the floor.

The music quickens to a rapturous movement and through the open window alights the object of her dream, the spirit of the rose. With what joy, with what abandon, does he dance, blown hither and thither like a rose petal in the wind.

At his magic touch she is spirited out of her chair to join him in the ever-quickenning, soothing melody of the waltz. How high she leaps, yet so gracefully that it seems as if she, too, had forsaken her mortal body. Together they float through the still air, impelled everywhere by the fairy-like touch of his hand. Then the music slowly dies away and ceases. A moment and she is again in her chair, her features

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still calm in repose, unruffled, as if what had just transpired was but an elfin touch of our imagination. Bending over her for a brief moment, the rose-coloured sprite disappears through the open window just as the first rays of dawn trace curious shadows on the wall.

The Maiden stirs, and, smoothing her sleep-laden eyes, looks about her as if what was in truth but a dream were reality. The room is empty. Then she remembers, her face lights up in a sad half-smile, and as she presses the rose to her bosom the curtain falls.



Le Spectre de la Rose, first performed on June 2nd, 1910, at the Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris, is a choreographic masterpiece, and, as danced by Thamar Karsavina and Vaslav Nijinsky, was a *poème dansé* of such rare beauty that it remains one of the most precious memories of those who were privileged to witness it.

Fokine composed this miniature ballet expressly for Nijinsky, who had a perfectly matched partner in Karsavina. The Sadler's Wells Ballet have done well to add to their repertory some of those ballets which have justly acquired the status of classics. The revival of this particular work, however, is of questionable service. Created for the two artists mentioned, it was intended to combine the rare *élévation* and *ballon* of Nijinsky with the grace and romantic poetry of Karsavina's movements. Unless such a combination of artists can be rediscovered, to revive the ballet is simply to invite criticism from those who saw the original, or to convey a false impression to those who did not.

The original setting showed the simple bedroom of a young girl in modest circumstances. The walls were covered with a floral paper, while the woodwork was painted white, as if to emphasise the virginal character of the room's occupant; the furniture indicated the Victorian period. But Mr. Whistler's setting suggests not the Victorian era, but the

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Empire period, to which his high-waisted costume for the Young Girl lends support. The setting is charming, particularly the enchanting view of the rose-garden, but both room and costume suggest wealth and sophistication. It is difficult to believe that the fashionable Miss of Whistler's conception and surroundings would be inspired to dream so beautiful a dream as she muses on a rose, tender souvenir of her first ball.

The present revival has been supervised by Mme. Karsavina herself. But, with all due respect, I wonder how completely the present choreographic version accords with the original conception. It seems to me to have lost something of the old sweep and flow, that ineffable memory of two phantoms dancing in the moonlight, their movements as soft and as gentle as a summer night's breeze. I wonder, too, if the present interpreters of the Young Girl realise that Fokine suggests that the girl is dreaming what we are shown, by the charming conceit of making her dance with her eyes apparently closed in sleep. Nowadays, the dancer's eyes are too often wide awake.

BALLET BY NINETTE DE VALOIS

JOB

A Masque for Dancing in 8 Scenes.

Book: Geoffrey Keynes.

Music: R. Vaughan Williams.

Scenery and costumes: Gwendolen Raverat.

Wigs and masks: Hedley Briggs.

Choreography: Ninette de Valois.

*First revived by "Wells" Co., "Old Vic" Theatre, London,
September 22nd, 1931.*

CHARACTERS

Job	.	.	.	John MacNair
His Wife	.	.	.	Marjorie Stewart
His Three Daughters	.	.	.	Ursula Moreton Marie Neilson Doreen Adams
His Seven Sons ¹	.	.	.	Stanley Judson, Hedley Briggs, Walter Gore, William Chappell, Claude Newman, Robert Stuart, Travis Kemp
War, Pestilence, and Famine	.	.	.	William Chappell Walter Gore Hedley Briggs
The Three Messengers	.	.	.	Robert Stuart Claude Newman Travis Kemp
The Three Comforters	.	.	.	William Chappell Walter Gore Hedley Briggs
Elihu	.	.	.	Stanley Judson

¹ Since the 1935-36 season the seven wives of Job's sons have been added in Scene III.





[Photo: J. W. Debenham]

SCENE FROM "JOB", SC. VI

BALLET BY NINETTE DE VALOIS

Satan Anton Dolin
Job's Spiritual Self . . . Gilding Clarke
The Children of God, Sons of the Morning.

The stage-curtain rises to disclose a drop-cloth, which is an enlarged version of the print called *The Ancient of Days Striking the First Circle of the Earth*.¹ The Ancient, nude, his flesh glowing from the reflected light of the surrounding red and black clouds pierced with golden rays, is shown leaning forward in a crouching position, his long grey hair and flowing beard blown by the wind, his left arm stretched vertically downwards, as he prepares to describe a circle with the compasses controlled by his fingers. Before the drop-cloth are seated Job, a dignified old man in classic robes, and beside him his wife. The drop-cloth rises on the scene proper.

Scene I.

The foreground is dominated by a great tree-trunk hung with a psalter, lute, trumpet and other early musical instruments. In the background is a large flock of grazing sheep, symbol of material prosperity. In the far distance is a range of mountains, and on the far left a Gothic church, token of spiritual wealth.

Enter Job's seven sons and three daughters, the former clad in grey tunics, the latter in kirtles of red and green. The girls kneel and the young men dance about them, then it is the girls' turn to dance about their brothers. The dance becomes general. But the fading light warns of the approach of night and Job and his wife rise to their feet. Job, now in the full tide of prosperity, self-righteous and glorying in his good deeds, extends his arms toward Heaven and offers up prayers to God for the blessings bestowed upon him, in which thanksgiving his children take part. The latter depart and now Job and his wife compose themselves to sleep. But Satan comes to trouble their couch with evil dreams.

The scene shifts to Heaven, symbolised by a flight of broad

¹The subject is derived from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Bk. VII, 11, 225-231. A reproduction of this print forms the frontispiece to Wright (Thomas), *The Life of William Blake*, Vol II.

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steps set against an area of night sky scored with occasional stars and framed in an arch of red-tinged clouds. At the top of the steps is a simple throne on which is seated Job's spiritual self. The Children of God dance solemnly before him. At the bottom of the steps, one knee to the ground, crouches a sombre male figure, nude except for a loincloth. It is Satan, the prototype of evil. The Children of God kneel and raise their arms in homage to the Godhead. He extends his arm towards Satan, who is unmoved. Then the Dark Angel appears to dispute with the Godhead. He urges that Job's belief in God be put to the test, by submitting his mortal body to the fire of temptation. The Godhead appears to consent and Satan withdraws. Now the Children of God take up new poses and form protective groups before the Godhead. The vision fades.

Scene II.

Gradually the light returns and we see the same scene, empty except for the impassive brooding figure of Satan, standing before the throne, now unoccupied. In a mood of wrath he dances a warlike measure, his arms ever thrusting forward, as he works himself into a fury. How he exults in each new access of strength, the while thunder rolls and discord grows. Suddenly, he usurps the throne, his action marked by a deafening clap of thunder! Job's sons and daughters enter and form a group to the left.

Scene III.

With Satan's eyes we look down on Earth and see Job's sons and daughters. They are dancing and feasting. Satan rises from his throne, descends to Earth, and destroys the Children of Job.

Scene IV.

The Earth, shrouded in half-darkness. Satan, hovering about the sleeping Job and his wife, fills their dreams with the grim spectres of threatening War, Pestilence and Famine. Job and his wife rise from their uneasy couch and with the growing light of dawn, it is possible to make out ranges of

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yellowish-brown hills, dotted with the green tufts of bushes and trees, and stone temples now laid in ruins. The sky begins to glow red with the rising sun.

Scene V.

Enter three Messengers who dance before Job. They bring him the dread tidings of the destruction of all his possessions and the death of his sons and daughters. The Messengers are followed by Satan, who darts toward Job and his wife, threatens them, and as swiftly departs. He is followed by three bearded Comforters, wily hypocrites who, with pointing fingers and writhing hands, at first offer sympathy, then pass to rebuke and anger. Job, filled with bitterness at his misfortunes and resenting what he believes to be God's ill-usage of him, rebels and cries out: "Let the day perish wherein I was born!"

He invokes his vision of the Godhead, but when Heaven is revealed to him he sees not God, but Satan enthroned, his satellite angels grouped about him. They raise their arms in fealty. Job shrinks back in terror.

Scene VI.

Once more we are on Earth, where Elihu, Son of the Morning, young, beautiful, and radiant with the pure light of Heaven, comes to Job and reproves him for his injustice towards God. The angel declares that true virtue resides not so much in actual deeds as in the thoughts which inspired them. Then Job realises that he has grievously sinned. Elihu dances and comforts Job. He is granted another vision of Heaven and this time he sees the Godhead enthroned. On either side of Him stand winged angels in white, their robes blazoned with a broad red cross. Before the Godhead dance the Children of God.

Enter Satan who, exulting in his evil-doing, claims the victory over Job. The Godhead rises and summons Satan to stand before Him. The Dark Angel advances in a defiant mood; the Godhead remains unmoved. But when Satan stoops to kiss his robe, the Godhead, filled with wrath at this mockery, stretches out his arm towards Satan, who, as though

struck by lightning, falls back and rolls down the steps. Again we are permitted to look down to Earth, wherein the growing light we see Job, his wife, and his children, now restored to him, kneel and offer prayers to God for their deliverance from evil.

Scene VIII.

We return to Earth. Job and his wife, the former now humble and contrite, are seen seated at the foot of a fig-tree. Behind is a vista of rolling plains and gleaming golden wheat-fields. To the right is a cottage and a glimpse of the sea. Job's sons and daughters gather about their parents and pay them homage. The curtain falls.



Mr. Geoffrey Keynes, the well-known surgeon and leading authority on the work of William Blake, had long contemplated the writing of a synopsis for a ballet to be based on that artist's illustrations for the *Book of Job*. Not only did the sequence of the story provide materials for the introduction, climax, and conclusion necessary to dramatic representation, but the drawings lent themselves to adaptation in terms of stage decoration, just as the groupings and poses of the characters portrayed offered inspiration for the choreographic design.

Blake's drawings for *Job* total twenty-one, and the main problem was to reduce this number to a suitable proportion, by eliminating those scenes whose very nature rendered them untranslatable in terms of the theatre, while maintaining the continuity of the action.

Mr. Keynes discussed his project with the artist, Mrs. Gwendolen Raverat, and as a result of their conversations over many months, it was found possible by fusing together some episodes and omitting others to concentrate the twenty-one plates into eight scenes. Mrs. Raverat then worked on adapting the drawings for the purpose of the settings and costumes, which designs were tried out on a model stage. Then arose the problem of the musical score. After considering many possibilities, it was resolved to approach Dr. Vaughan Williams, who accepted the commission with enthusiasm.

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The ballet was first offered to Serge Diaghilev during his London season of 1928, a French version of the *scenario* being submitted to him and accompanied by a book of reproductions of the Blake drawings. But the suggestion was rejected on the ground that the proposed ballet was "too English" and "too old-fashioned." Mr. Keynes, in describing his approach, comments with justifiable tartness, "the book of engravings, however, was not returned, and it was interesting to see distinct traces of Blake's influences appearing in another biblical ballet, *The Prodigal Son*, produced by Diaghilev in his following London season."

Since there now appeared small prospect of a stage presentation of the work, Mr. Keynes resigned himself to a purely musical rendering of his synopsis, and Dr. Vaughan Williams scored his composition as a work for a concert orchestra. The score was completed early in 1930 and first performed on October 23rd by the Queen's Hall Orchestra, conducted by the composer. Perhaps the most gratifying tribute to the worth of the music was that made by the musical critic of *The Times*, who observed: "The hearing of the music makes one want to have a realisation of the ballet worthy alike of Blake and of Vaughan Williams. . . . It contains tunes of such simple beauty that one seems to have known them always, but these lines lead on into a realm of musical thought that one enters for the first time."

It is of interest to note that the composer derived his inspiration not from Mr. Keynes's *scenario*, but from Blake's engravings, so that, as Dr. Howes has pointed out, the music for a particular scene is not always in exact relation to the description of the action as printed in the programme. Although Job is described as a "Masque for Dancing," a masque is a spectacle which embraces *all* the arts of the theatre, therefore, since both singing and speech are absent, the term is incorrectly applied. The score, however, has a musical link with the great period of the Masque, namely the 16th and early 17th centuries, for the composer makes use of dance rhythms then in vogue such as the Saraband, Minuet, Pavane, and Galliard.

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Apart from this, the work is conceived in the modern idiom.

In 1930 the Camargo Society was founded and began making its contribution to the development of the art of Ballet in England. *Job* was an obvious choice for production and it was eventually performed at the Cambridge Theatre, London, on July 8th, 1931, the original full score being rearranged for small orchestra by Constant Lambert. The scenery and costumes were made after Mrs. Raverat's designs, while the choreography was devised by Ninette de Valois. The part of Satan was created by Anton Dolin. In September of the same year the production was added to the repertory of the Vic-Wells Ballet.

An important point to remember about *Job* is that it is not a choreographic version of the Biblical story, but of Blake's personal interpretation of it. Hence not only is the argument different, but the whole action is *symbolic*, not *material*. That is to say, we are not asked to witness a conflict between the powers of good led by God against the powers of evil headed by Satan. The struggle is purely mental, between self-love personified by the figure of Satan and true humanity symbolised by Job's spiritual self. There is also the struggle between earthly matters and spiritual thoughts which can take place simultaneously. These two domains of the mind are represented in a manner both effective and simple. All earthly characters are restricted to the stage level, while all spiritual characters or matters affecting the spirit are bounded by the flight of steps, over which they move as occasion demands.

Job, considered from the several viewpoints of story, music, dramatic effect, and choreography, is one of the most successful of English choreographic productions. It does not, of course, capture the wonderful dynamic force of Blake's drawings; that would be unreasonable to expect. But *Job* is very far from being a mere entertainment. Indeed, it approaches the height of a mystical experience when the work is presented with sincerity. *Job* is a definite achievement

which will always be associated with the name of its choreographer.

The prime virtue of *Job* is that it treats a lofty theme with a grave and reverent dignity. It is far closer to a masque than a ballet because it is much more a study in dramatic movement than actual dancing, while the very nature of the setting tends to restrict the dancing area and particularly such movements as steps of elevation. In general, the choreography reflects the influence of the Central European School. The actions assigned to Job and his family are simple, unaffected, and conceived in an angular archaic stylisation which establishes a Biblical atmosphere. The actions allotted to the Godhead and his angels are cold and austere, symbolic perhaps of a supernatural intelligence, yet infused with a suggestion of immense latent power. In contrast Satan is presented as a finely-built male figure in the flower of physical strength, and his actions, in contrast to those of Job's spiritual self, are brisk and alert, and his nature fiery and aggressive.

The role of Satan dominates the whole masque. If the struggle between Job's spiritual self and his material counterpart, symbolised by the Godhead and by Satan respectively, is to attain the dramatic intensity essential to the climax of the action, the Prince of Evil must be a worthy opponent of the Godhead. There is nothing mean or petty about Blake's Satan, who is cast in Miltonic mould. His downfall proceeds from the greatest ambition of all, his determination to equal the most High, or else be reduced to naught. It is not inappropriate to quote some lines from Milton's prose portrait:

He above the rest
In shape and gesture fondly eminent
Stood like a tower. . . .

His face
Deep scars of thunder had intrenched, and care
Sat on his faded cheek, but under brows
Of dauntless courage, and considerable pride
Waiting revenge

Because the dancer-mime who most nearly conveys this impression will do much to ensure the masque's success.

THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

THE HAUNTED BALLROOM

Ballet in 1 Act and 2 Scenes.

Book: Geoffrey Toye.

Music: Geoffrey Toye.

Scenery and costumes: Motley.

Choreography: Ninette de Valois.

First produced: Sadler's Wells Theatre, London, April 3rd, 1934.

CHARACTERS

The Master of Tregennis	Robert Helpmann
Young Tregennis . . .	Freida Bamford
Alicia	Alicia Markova
Ursula	Ursula Moreton
Beatrice	Beatrice Appleyard
The Stranger Player . .	William Chappell
Ghosts, Butler, Footmen.	

The appropriate atmosphere is established with the first few notes of the music and retained unbroken with the final lowering of the curtain. The overture commences with the solemn tolling of a bell, which is succeeded by a disturbing melody, from time to time broken with ghostly sounds— heavy thuds, the liquid notes of running water, and the faint whispers of a waltz tune. A sense of impending tragedy invades the dark theatre.

The curtain rises to disclose a large bare room, which has clearly not been used for many years. From the centre of the ceiling hangs a chandelier with thick ropes of cobweb stretching from its branches to the topmost corners of the surrounding walls.

Enter young Tregennis, followed by three ladies in ball-dress, each carrying a large fan. The boy, in granting their wishes to be shown the room, is not without deep misgivings. But the ladies mock his fears and fluttering their fans begin to dance. While he entreats them to desist, his father enters and sternly orders him to bed.





[Photo: J. W. Dehaven]

SCENE FROM "THE CODS GO A-BEGGING"

BALLETS BY NINETTE DE VALOIS

His son absent, he relates the tragic story of the ballroom in which so many of his ancestors were found dead. The tale ended, the ladies cannot repress a shudder and nervously take their departure; but the Master of Tregennis remains gazing into space, obsessed with the fear that he is doomed to the fate of his ancestors.

After a brief musical interlude, which intensifies the eerie atmosphere, the curtain rises on the second scene. Gradually the prevailing gloom lightens and the walls are seen to be hung with faded portraits. Then, strange happening, the walls become semi-transparent and give place to a dark sky powdered with stars.

A sombre figure in evening dress wearing a black half-mask steals into the room. He produces an ivory baton and with a wave of his arm summons an array of spectral dancers, who tread the measures of a weird dance, impelled hither and thither at his direction.

The Master of Tregennis, unable to sleep, appears in the doorway, drawn to the ballroom by an irresistible power. He asks the Stranger who his companions are, and is told that they are dancers waiting for the Master to lead them. He flings off his dressing-gown and bounds and spins in a mad dance. Enter three more ghostly dancers, who resemble the three ladies who had invaded the ballroom. They dance with fans. The music grows more mysterious and threatening; and through the turgid melody emerge snatches of a waltz tune, mingled with the hiss of driving sleet and the rattle of falling stones.

One of the ghosts with a fan dances alone, and now all her companions recede into the night. The Master, attracted by this beautiful phantom, dances with her. But soon the spectres return, followed by the spirits of the Master's ancestors, to take their part in the gruesome measure. The waltz melody grows more insistent, louder, and wilder, to become a mad inferno of dance-compelling rhythm from which the Master cannot escape. Struggle as he will, he is urged on

THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

by these relentless whirling wraiths. But exhaustion fast reaches its limits and suddenly he drops dead. The ghostly company fades from sight, the stars vanish, and the ballroom takes on its wonted gloom.

A ghostly bell awakens the sleeping house to a sense of tragedy. The youthful heir bursts into the room, followed by the startled guests. Then he sees his father's lifeless body, and his horror is echoed by the ladies. As the latter sadly take their departure, retainers bear the Master away. Young Tregennis, pale and distraught, stares into space, conscious that one day, he, too, must fall victim to the same dread fate.



The Haunted Ballroom has much in common with the romantic ballet of the *Giselle* type. But Mr. Toye has forsaken the melancholy forests beloved of Nodier and Gautier, and set his ballet indoors, and he even gains by the change, for the place of action, a disused ballroom which has witnessed many tragic events, is no less mysterious and certainly more sinister. It is a room out of Poe's "House of Usher" peopled with Heine's phantoms, for the second and main scene of Mr. Toye's ballet is obviously an adaptation of the second act of *Giselle*, and, similarly, in both ballets the first scene is an excuse for the second.

The chief merit of *The Haunted Ballroom* is its ability to establish an appropriate suggestion of ghostly presences, unseen but none the less felt, who seem to await but the signal to exert their dreaded influence. This eerie atmosphere is maintained until the final lowering of the curtain, a result to which Mr. Toye's rhythmic and colourful music makes no small contribution.

The settings and costumes by Motley are most effective. It is a pity, however, that the original costume for the Phantom Player has been altered. He was wont to wear a tall hat with sable plumes and a long black cloak which trailed behind him, and he summoned and directed his spirit army by playing on

BALLETS BY NINETTE DE VALOIS

an ivory pipe. That costume had a certain fantasy and belonged to no particular period. But the former flute-player has now become a kind of demon conductor in evening dress, a figure reminiscent of Lon Chaney in *The Phantom of the Opera*, thus substituting melodrama for a lyric tragedy.

But to return to the action. The opening scene quickly establishes a fateful mood, but none of the present interpreters quite conveys that irrepressible shudder with which Markova glided from the ballroom, a shudder which was communicated to the audience.

The main dancing occurs in the second scene. The choreography is interesting, and musical, and the patterns ingeniously contrived. The Master's dance is too short if it is intended that, like a victim of the wilis, he should succumb from being forced to dance to death. If, on the other hand, the mere appearance of the phantoms is sufficient to produce death, then the dances of the phantoms are too protracted.

De Valois has made use of the technique of the classical ballet for the dances arranged for the Master and his guests, but the *ensembles* are conceived in the spirit of the modern German school. While the actual result is theatrically effective, the mixture of styles, artistically considered, must be considered a fault. Finally, the concluding scene, in which the heir finds his father's body, is too long drawn out and comes somewhat in the nature of an anti-climax. It also affords an interesting example of the dangers of allowing the action to stray beyond the proscenium frame, when the world of the imagination at once sheds its magic.

Robert Helpmann as the Master of Tregennis, dominates the ballet throughout. He is possessed of an acute dramatic sense and appreciation of character which combine to produce an inspired portrait which lives in the memory.

THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

THE RAKE'S PROGRESS

*Ballet in 6 Scenes.**Book: Gavin Gordon.**Music: Gavin Gordon.**Scenery and costumes: Rex Whistler.**Choreography: Ninette de Valois.**First produced: Sadler's Wells Theatre, London, May 20th, 1935.*

CHARACTERS

The Rake	Walter Gore
The Tailor	Claude Newman
The Jockey	Richard Ellis
The Fencing-Master	John Byron
The Bravo	Maurice Brooke
The Hornblower	Frank Staff
The Betrayed Girl	Alicia Markova
Her Mother	Ailne Phillips
The Dancing-Master	Harold Turner
The Dancer	Ursula Moreton
The Servant	Jill Gregory
The Rake's Friend	William Chappell
Ladies of the Town	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; gap: 10px;"> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; padding-left: 10px; margin-right: 10px;">Sheila McCarthy, Gwyneth</div> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; padding-left: 10px; margin-right: 10px;">Mathews, Elizabeth Miller,</div> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; padding-left: 10px; margin-right: 10px;">Peggy Melliss, Doris May¹</div> </div>
The Ballad Singer	Joy Newton
Musicians	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; gap: 10px;"> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; padding-left: 10px; margin-right: 10px;">Frank Staff</div> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; padding-left: 10px; margin-right: 10px;">Leslie Edwards</div> </div>
The Creditors	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; gap: 10px;"> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; padding-left: 10px; margin-right: 10px;">Claude Newman</div> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; padding-left: 10px; margin-right: 10px;">Maurice Brooke</div> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; padding-left: 10px; margin-right: 10px;">Leslie Edwards</div> </div>
The Gamblers	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; gap: 10px;"> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; padding-left: 10px; margin-right: 10px;">Richard Ellis</div> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; padding-left: 10px; margin-right: 10px;">Leslie Edwards</div> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; padding-left: 10px; margin-right: 10px;">Frank Staff</div> </div>
The Gentleman with a Rope	Harold Turner

¹ Afterwards Pamela May.

BALLET BY NINETTE DE VALOIS

The Violinist	John Byron
The Sailor	Claude Newman
The King	Leslie Edwards
The Pope	Maurice Brooke
Visitors	Gwyneth Mathews Peggy Melliss Doris May

After a few introductory chords the stage curtain rises to reveal a drop-curtain representing a London street in the 18th century. It affords an attractive perspective: a double row of well-built Georgian houses varied with an occasional church or shop¹; in the middle of the roadway is a statue in the classical style.

This drop-curtain, which serves to set the period, rises to disclose a room in the house of the Rake. It is a large panelled chamber lit by two windows. A young man who has lately inherited a fortune is holding his morning levée, at which he is waited on by a choice selection of rogues, who, scenting an innocent to pluck, have contrived to attach themselves to his service, on the pretext of affording him instruction in some of the many diverting pastimes open to a gentleman endowed with the appropriate leisure and means.

This young man, clearly not long risen from bed, since he is still wearing a night-cap and salmon-pink dressing-gown, is being measured for a new coat in scarlet and gold, by a wizened journeyman tailor in a snuff-coloured suit. No sooner is our hero out of the tailor's hands than his attention is claimed by a shady-looking jockey in pink blouse and brown breeches, who tells his patron how he has won a cup for him in a certain race. Then a fencing-master desires to instruct his lordship in the latest tricks of sword-play. Now and again a sinister-looking bravo, sporting a patch over one eye and

¹ The original setting for this ballet was lost when the company was appearing in Holland and had to depart quickly as a result of the German invasion of that country. The present scenery, made to replace the old, when the ballet was revived (Oct. 27th, 1942), differs from the original in certain minor details.

THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

wearing a bottle-green jacket, offers to pick a quarrel with any person his patron chooses to indicate. Next a hornblower, in brown faced with yellow, introduces the Rake to the delights of music. The young man takes the instrument and even attempts a few notes himself. Then he doffs his night-cap and sets on his wig, while the tailor helps him off with his gown and assists him to try on his gay new coat.

A dapper little man in pale blue, who till now has remained quietly seated on a chair, begins to show signs of uneasiness, because it is time for our hero's dancing-lesson. Thereupon the Rake dismisses his mentors with a present of guineas and addresses himself to the dance. His master, tucking his kit¹ under his chin, plays a lively air and demonstrates a sequence of florid steps, which the pupil, although placed in correct preparatory position, finds to be more than he can manage and so provokes the constant corrections of his teacher, who occasionally relieves his exasperated feelings in a succession of capers and bounds.

Enter a pretty young serving-girl in red bodice and black skirt who is pushed into the room by an older woman, presumably her mother. The latter forces herself on the young man's notice and demands reparation for the injury done to her daughter. The young man who is clearly on the way to achieving a reputation as a libertine, offers a solatium in the form of a bag of guineas which the mother consents to accept.

No sooner have mother and daughter departed, than the dancing-master calls his pupil to attention. Again he laboriously strives to advance himself in the difficult art of the dance, on which scene the drop-curtain falls.

There is a brief *entr'acte* in which we see three women, their faces hid by fluttering fans, cross the street. From the opposite direction come the mother and her daughter. Again the street is empty until it is crossed by a newcomer, a negress returning from a wine-shop, a fat-bellied flask clutched tightly to her breast.

The drop-curtain rises to show a room in a disorderly house.

¹ A miniature violin used by dancing-masters.

There is a door to the left and one to the right. The back wall is decorated with a large nude in the pseudo-classical style depicting the amours of an opulent Mars and Venus. At the left side of the wall is a recess with curtains drawn to one side to disclose a bed with tumbled sheets. To the right is a round table with a few chairs. A number of women of easy virtue are grouped about the room.

One girl, sitting on the table with her foot on a chair, toys with a glass of wine, while she exchanges confidences with another girl seated on her right. Three other girls in the centre laugh hilariously at a doubtful story. The girls at the table tidy their hair and smooth their dresses. At the same time the negro wench comes in with the wine, which she sets on the table.

Enter the Rake's friend, obviously a trifle gay. The two girls, espying his state, are much amused. He chuckles them under the chin and clumsily dances a few steps. A loud crash of music heralds the arrival of the Rake himself, who enters by the left doorway, swaying on the threshold. The girls greet him with affected ceremony. He is seized by the three centre girls with whom he dances; the other two are dragged to the table by his friend.

From the right-hand door comes a woman dancer, bearing a large pewter dish. Placing it on the ground, she dances upon it, when it is removed by the negress. The dancer goes to the centre of the room and sits on a chair placed by the Rake's friend. He stands at one side of her, the Rake at the other. She extends her leg to each in turn, then draws down her stockings to the ankle. The dancer crosses to the table with the Rake and his friend, restores the chair to the table, and chats with the two women. Meanwhile the three other women begin to quarrel. They rise from the table, cross to the front, and resume their exchanges with much shaking of fists and skilfully directed blows. At last the Rake's friend calms the termagants, who return to the table and resume their drinking.

The left-hand door opens and a female ballad-singer enters

THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

accompanied by a harpist and a trombone-player. The singer bursts into song, to the great delight of the company, who lustily join in the chorus, one of the women playing an imaginary concertina with her stays. The Rake accompanies the singer in the final verse until, overcome with wine, he collapses to the floor. The harpist and trombonist take their leave.

The Rake is helped up by two of the women who deposit him in a chair by the table. The ballad-singer and three of the women dance. The Rake climbs on to the table, springs to the ground and dances with the women. Meanwhile the dancer pulls off her stockings and, holding one in each hand, dangles them before him. In this pose they dance together. Gradually the others join in and now the dancing grows fast and furious. The Rake again leaps on to the table, snatches jingling bags of guineas from his pockets to toss them to the women. One woman runs to and fro retrieving the money; the others, grouped about the table, become more and more boisterous. On subsequent events the curtain discreetly falls.

We are again in the street. A man enters stealthily; he is followed by another. They are evidently bailiffs lurking in wait to apprehend a defaulting debtor. Soon they are joined by the wizened tailor, ruefully conning a long bill for services rendered.

Enter the Rake. On being confronted by this menacing trio, he recoils in fear. A newcomer, the young girl whom he had deceived, draws near. Learning of his plight, she offers, out of her love for him, to settle his debts with her savings. The Rake's creditors eagerly accept her proposal and take their departure. The young girl, left alone, dances sadly, gazing despairingly towards the Rake's abode.

The drop-curtain rises to reveal a gambling-den, a bare-looking room, provided with a few chairs and a baize-covered table, on which stand dice, a wooden cup, and packs of cards. Some shady-looking men are preparing to play, when the Rake arrives, reduced to shirt and breeches. He joins in the game hoping to retrieve his fortune. But luck or artifice is against him, and his resources steadily dwindle. He becomes





SCENE FROM "THE RAKE'S PROGRESS", SC. II

[Photo: Cambridge-Salganek

more and more distraught, so tortured between hope constantly deferred and the horrid spectre of absolute ruin, that when his last guinea has gone the way of the rest, the shock is too great and something snaps in his fevered brain. The curtain falls.

Once again we are in the street, where the young girl waits in anticipation of the release of her lover, the Rake, from the debtors' prison in which he has been confined. To while away the time she occupies herself with embroidery. But darkness falls and still he has failed to appear.

The drop-curtain rises on the last and grimmest scene of all, a madhouse. It is a bare room with a heavy door to the left, and, in the background, two barred cells, each occupied. The cell on the left contains a nude man who, believing himself a king, sits majestically upon a chair, a crown on his head, a sceptre held vertically in his right hand. The cell on the right holds another man who, imagining himself to be a high ecclesiastical dignitary, stares stiffly before him, dressed in the mitre and robes of his office.

In the foreground, four listless men sit gloomily on the bare floor. One man, in tattered tunic, stares fixedly at a length of rope which he holds in his hand. He begins to dance with it, and, as he does so, the rope, seen through his disordered imagination, assumes a variety of horrid shapes which provoke appropriate reactions.

Suddenly the heavy door swings open and the Rake, now wearing only his breeches, is flung into the room and the door slammed tight. Vainly he attacks the door, feverishly finger-ing the jamb and trying to claw his way out. Then, exhausted by his efforts, he falls to the ground.

The companions of the Gentleman with a Rope successively reveal their mania in various dances. One man continually deals himself a hand of playing cards, which he perpetually scans, now with transports of joy, now with the utmost sorrow and despair. Another man carrying a telescope scans the horizon, pulls at imaginary ropes, and directs the hoisting of phantom sails. The last man, with a sheet drawn cloak-

wise about his shoulders and a piece of music for headgear, plays a soundless fiddle.

All at once the Rake leaps up and begins a frenzied dance. The young girl enters and goes to her lover, but he has no memory of her. Again he tries to escape through the door, his efforts watched indifferently by his companions. Failing in his endeavour and feeling himself growing weaker, he collapses. The young girl, filled with pity, sits down beside the Rake and tries to soothe and comfort him. There is an interruption in the form of a party of women visitors, come to indulge a morbid curiosity for sightseeing. As they enter, fluttering their fans, the sick men instinctively turn their backs and huddle together in humiliation. The sightseers depart.

The Rake, exhausted by his excesses and obsessed with remorse at the fruits of his folly, becomes seized with frightful paroxysms. His body becomes contorted, then grows rigid. Painfully he gasps for breath then dies, his wasted frame supported by the young girl who even in his utmost misery had never ceased to love him. As his companions, conscious of something amiss, draw near, the curtain slowly falls.



Some years ago, when discussing with Frederick Ashton the subject of possible themes for ballet, I suggested that William Hogarth's well-known series of paintings entitled *The Rake's Progress*, which are in the Soane Museum, Lincoln's Inn Fields, offered an excellent basis for a choreographic work. Ashton did not make use of my suggestion, but I was none the less interested to see that the same idea had occurred to someone else, although I do not suggest that it arose in any way from my talk with Ashton.

In the scenario by Gavin Gordon, the eight episodes which form the subject of the original pictures have been reduced to six, by combining the first two and omitting the fifth, in which the Rake marries for wealth in the vain hope of retrieving his fortunes, which would obviously complicate an otherwise simple tale.

The music, also composed by Gavin Gordon, is colourful and well adapted to the varying moods of the several scenes, and, moreover, has the rhythmic quality essential for translation in terms of dancing.

The scenery and costumes are by Rex Whistler. The scenery is constructed on lines similar to those that were employed by Claud Lovat Fraser in his setting for Sir Nigel Playfair's revival of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, and consists of a permanent setting with an act-drop, in this case a cloth depicting a composite London street, and a backcloth changed with each scene. The costumes, based to some extent on the characters depicted by Hogarth, are effective, with the exception of that for the Betrayed Girl, which suggests a waitress at a teashop with a liking for period refinement.

The Rake's Progress, while not so much a ballet as a morality play, is an interesting composition which reflects great credit on Miss de Valois's appreciation of dramatic effect and her ability to evoke period atmosphere. In the first episode the best numbers are the tailor's dance, the hornblower's dance, and the dancing-master's long solo. The other characters do little more than provide local colour, for the fencing-master, who might have been the basis of an exciting *pas de deux*, contents himself with a couple of thrusts; the bravo takes a few paces to and fro; and the jockey hardly dances at all. In the actual numbers one is conscious of a sense of disproportion, for the dances allotted to the tailor and the hornblower are brief, while that of the dancing-master is almost a scene in itself and far too protracted.

The episode of the dancing-lesson seems to me inappropriate and not well proportioned. In the first place what we are shown is a professional ballet-dancer teaching the Rake some simple steps and positions in classical ballet. But surely a young man who had just come into a fortune and was desirous of entering fashionable society, would seek to be instructed in the social dances of the day. Here would have been a fine opportunity to introduce one of those mincing creatures who passed for dancing-masters in certain circles.

As regards the balance between teacher and pupil, the former is most active in exhibiting the graces of his profession, but the pupil contributes little, attention being largely concentrated on the correct placing of his arms in the fifth position *en haut*.

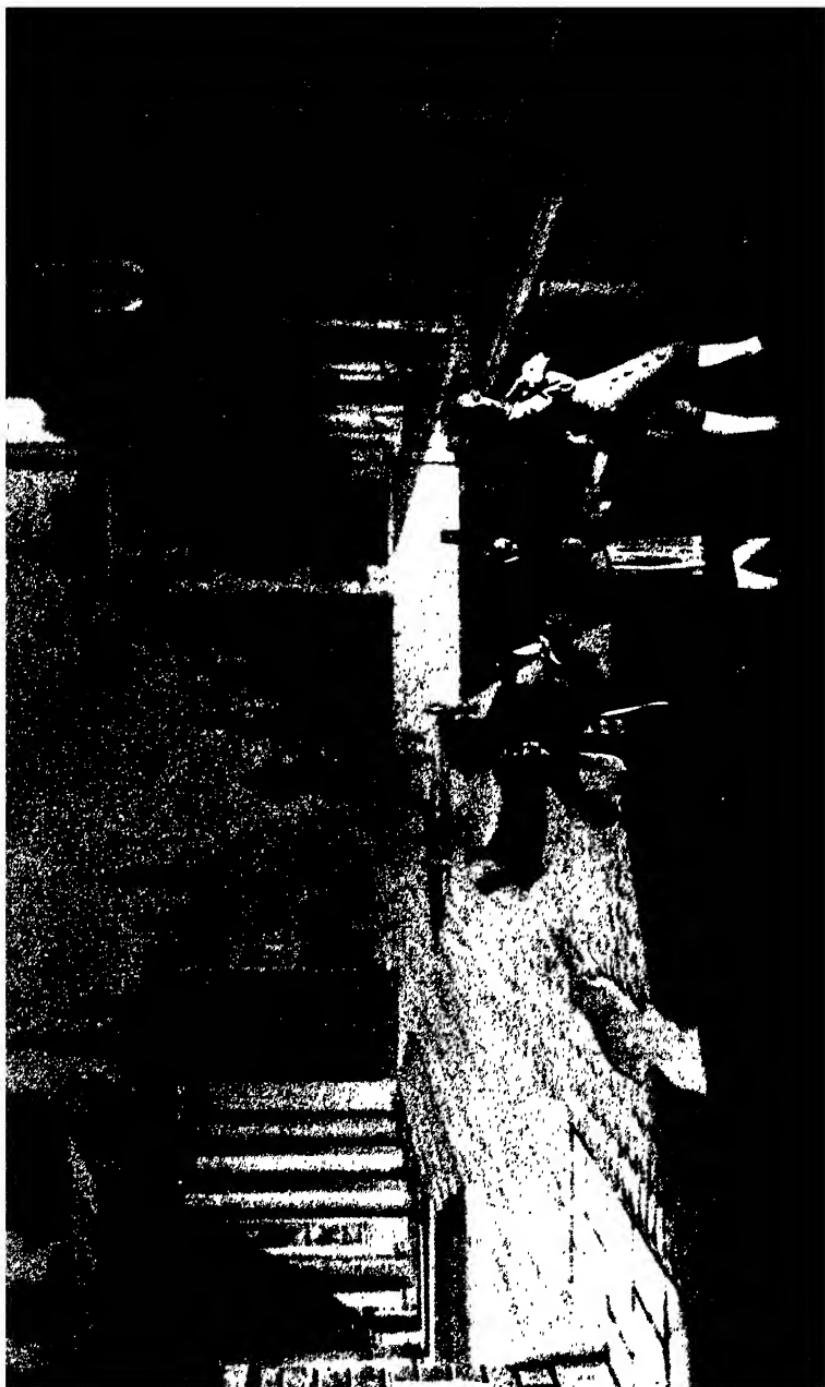
It may be of interest to mention that the characters depicted by Hogarth in the Rake's levée were drawn from life. For instance, the dancing-master is supposed to represent William Essex, while the fencing-master is Dubois, a Frenchman who was killed in a duel fought at Moor Fields on May 18th, 1732.

The scene of the orgy is brisk and the nearest of any to the Hogarthian spirit, and has the merit of being *danced*. Note how the orchestration suggests the shrill chatter of the women. Hogarth is said to have acquired the materials for his picture of raffish night life from visits to the Rose Tavern at the junction of Russell Street and Brydges Street, Covent Garden. This tavern of ill repute, which was next door to Drury Lane Theatre, was demolished when Garrick enlarged the theatre in 1771.

The fourth scene, set at White's Chocolate House, is effective but purely a mime play.

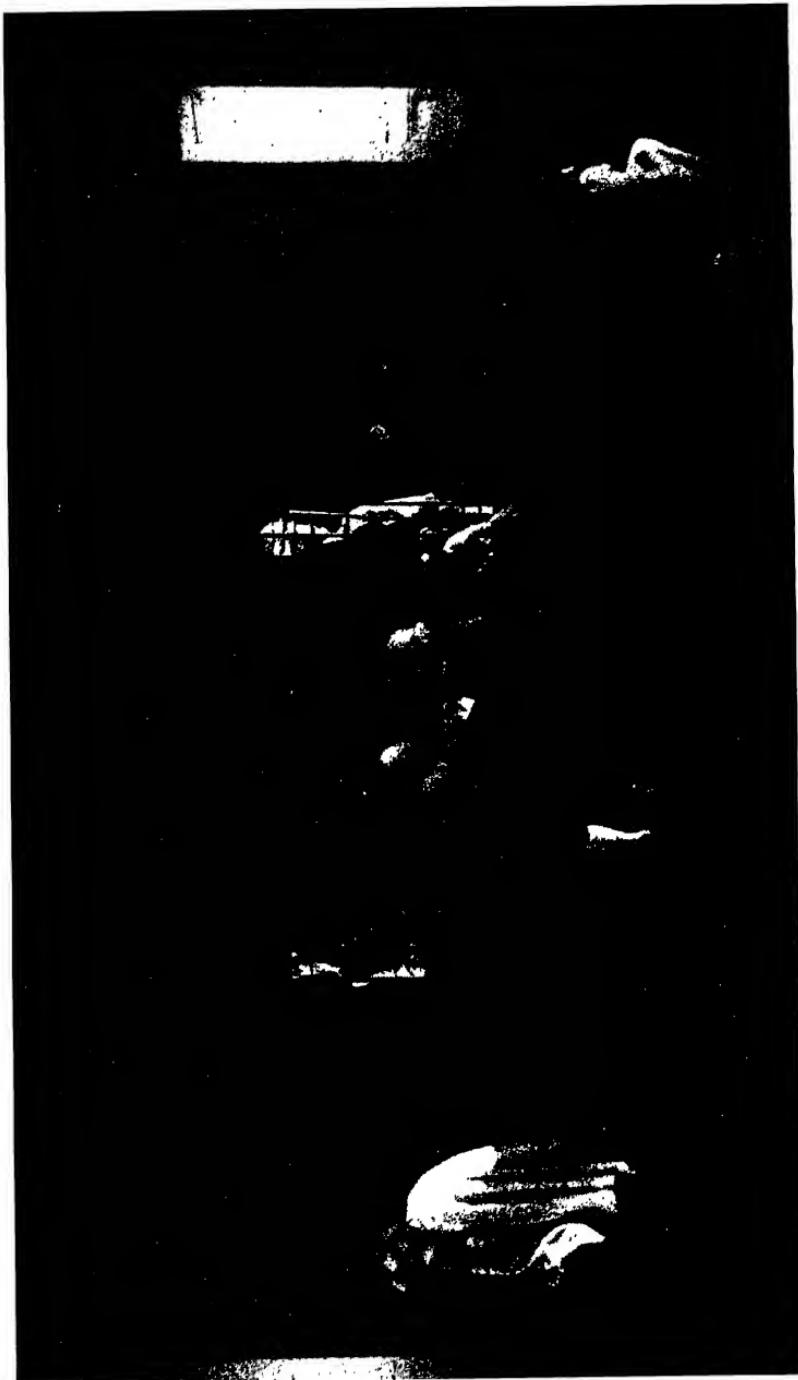
The fifth scene, which consists of little more than a few steps on place, a few poses, and some slow arm movements expressive of working at embroidery, I find too long and hardly suggestive of a devoted girl's mounting fear that her defaulting lover may not be released from the Fleet Prison after all. There are some ballet-goers, however, who find this episode poignant.

The sixth and last scene, a grim picture of Bedlam in the 18th century, is far too long and needs to be shortened considerably; first, because it drags, and secondly, because it is inadvisable to prolong this terrible picture of human misery, the sole purpose of which is to bring the tale to its final stage of awful retribution. This scene includes a remarkable dance with a rope which in the hands of certain interpreters is a genuine creation and, in its way, as *macabre* as Massine's Barman's Dance in his ballet *Union Pacific*.



[Photo: Tunbridge-Selznick]

SCENE FROM "THE RAKE'S PROGRESS", SC. VI



THE GODS GO A-BEGGING

Ballet in 1 Act.

Book: Sobek¹, adapted by Ninette de Valois.

Music: Handel, arranged by Sir Thomas Beecham.

Scenery and costumes: Hugh Stevenson.

Choreography: Ninette de Valois.

First produced by "Wells" Co., Sadler's Wells Theatre, January 10th, 1936.

CHARACTERS

A Serving Maid	Pearl Argyle			
A Shepherd	William Chappell			
Two Serving Maids	<table><tr><td>Ailne Phillips</td></tr><tr><td>Mary Honer</td></tr></table>	Ailne Phillips	Mary Honer	
Ailne Phillips				
Mary Honer				
Court Ladies	<table><tr><td>Ursula Moreton, Beatrice</td></tr><tr><td>Appleyard, June Brae, Joy</td></tr><tr><td>Newton, Gwyneth Mathews</td></tr></table>	Ursula Moreton, Beatrice	Appleyard, June Brae, Joy	Newton, Gwyneth Mathews
Ursula Moreton, Beatrice				
Appleyard, June Brae, Joy				
Newton, Gwyneth Mathews				
Noblemen	<table><tr><td>Robert Helpmann, Harold</td></tr><tr><td>Turner, Claude Newman, John</td></tr><tr><td>Byron, Leslie Edwards</td></tr></table>	Robert Helpmann, Harold	Turner, Claude Newman, John	Byron, Leslie Edwards
Robert Helpmann, Harold				
Turner, Claude Newman, John				
Byron, Leslie Edwards				
Black Lackeys	<table><tr><td>Molly Brown, Joan Leaman, Jill</td></tr><tr><td>Gregory, Laurel Gill², Guinevere</td></tr><tr><td>Parry, May Turner</td></tr></table>	Molly Brown, Joan Leaman, Jill	Gregory, Laurel Gill ² , Guinevere	Parry, May Turner
Molly Brown, Joan Leaman, Jill				
Gregory, Laurel Gill ² , Guinevere				
Parry, May Turner				
Mercury	Richard Ellis			

Scene. A forest glade.

The ballet consists of a series of ten numbers each of which contributes a stage in the sequence of the action.

Allegro. Preparations are in progress for a *fête champêtre*. The serving-maid and her friends prepare the feast, aided by six black lackeys.

¹ Pseudonym of Boris Kochno.

² Afterwards Laurel Martyn.

THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

Minuet. The noblemen and their ladies arrive, and into their midst strays a shepherd. They entice him into a dance.

Hornpipe. Dance of the shepherd and two serving-maids.

Musette. The chief serving-maid dances, but she is frightened by the unwelcome favours of two noblemen.

Ensemble. The noblemen and their ladies dance together.

Larghetto. The company stray off into the woods. The shepherd and the serving-maid, moved by a tender feeling, dance together.

Tamborino. The black lackeys execute a droll measure with great agility.

Gavotte. The shepherd and the serving-maid continue to dance together. The company, returning, are indignant, observing the love passages between the two, and order them to leave, unaware that they are Gods in disguise.

Dramatico. The wood suddenly darkens and the Messenger of the Gods arrives.

Bourrée-Finale. The company dance their homage to the Gods, and as night descends they leave the scene of their *fête champêtre*.



Les Dieux Mendiants, known in English by the not altogether satisfactory rendering, *The Gods Go a-Begging*, was originally devised by Sir Thomas Beecham for Serge Diaghilev, who presented the ballet, with choreography by George Balanchine, at His Majesty's Theatre, London, on July 16th, 1928.

It was a charming ballet, memorable for the *pas de deux* between the shepherd and the serving-maid, one of the most beautiful evocations of love, expressed in dance terms, known to me.

Miss de Valois's version of this ballet is also a pleasing composition, although it does not include a dance of the rare quality of the *pas de deux* mentioned. The chief attraction of her production is its restful mood and its suggestion of a courtly *fête champêtre* as depicted by Antoine Watteau.

BALLET BY NINETTE DE VALOIS

The setting and costumes by Hugh Stevenson contribute much to this *pastiche* of a bygone age of leisure. The final tableau¹ where the company pay homage to the gods, posed like two moonlit marble statues against an ultramarine sky, affords a moment of beauty which persists in the memory.

CHECKMATE

Ballet in 1 Scene with a Prologue.

Book: Arthur Bliss.

Music: Arthur Bliss.

Scenery and costumes: E. McKnight Kauffer.

Choreography: Ninette de Valois.

First produced: Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, Paris, June 15th, 1937.

CHARACTERS

Two Chess Players . . . .	. {	Frederick Ashton Alan Carter
Red Pawns . . . .	. {	Jill Gregory, Molly Brown, Linda Sheridan, Laurel Martyn, Elisabeth Kennedy, Joan Leaman, Wenda Horsburgh, Joyce Farron
First Red Knight . . . .	. {	Harold Turner
Second Red Knight . . . .	. {	William Chappell
Black Knights . . . .	. {	Richard Ellis Michael Somes
The Black Queen . . . .	. {	June Brae
The Red King . . . .	. {	Robert Helpmann
The Red Queen . . . .	. {	Pamela May
Red Castles . . . .	. {	Leslie Edwards John Nicholson

¹ In the production of this ballet by the Sadler's Wells Opera Ballet there is a backcloth for this final episode.

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Red Bishops	· {	Claude Newman
		Paul Reyloff
Black Pawns	· {	Margot Fonteyn, Mary Honer,
		Elizabeth Miller, Annabel Farjeon
	· {	Joy Newton, Anne Spicer
Black Castles		Leslie Edwards
	· {	John Nicholson

The overture fills the spectator with a sense of brooding tragedy. The curtain rises to reveal a blue drop-curtain, symbolical of the firmament, decorated with a gigantic outstretched arm—the raised hand of an immortal poised for the next move in a ghastly game of chess with human lives for pieces.

Beneath the all-dominating arm and seated at a table, bounded by sinister shadows, two warriors study a chess-board with concentrated gaze. They are Love, in armour shaded blue and yellow, and Death, in armour coloured red and grey. Love makes a move—and waits. Death's skeleton hand hovers over the pieces and replies. Love studies the position, then starts from her seat. It is checkmate. The vision fades.

The scene changes to a chequered floor with the furthest wall decorated with an abstract pattern in grey, red, white, yellow, and blue, scored with dark radiating lines. A seat near the wall will later provide a throne for the Red King.

The Pieces begin to assemble for the approaching contest. First come the pawns stepping gaily *sur les pointes*, then the two Red Knights, who enter from either side. Now come the Black Knights sent to appraise the strength of the enemy.

Enter the Black Queen, a bold, forceful personality. Her two Knights move to her side in support. She is prepared to use all means—treachery, love, force—to achieve victory. She attacks one of the Red Knights who retires. Then she turns upon the other Knight, who is bewitched by her beauty. She takes a red rose from her bosom and casts it at his feet.

BALLET BY NINETTE DE VALOIS

The Red Pawns retire, then the Black Queen and her Knights.

The enraptured Red Knight reveals his delight in a sentimental dance. His fellow Knight returns and the two face towards the throne as the Red Standard is brought in, guarded by Pawns. They are followed by two Bishops who, moving with slow dignified tread, bless the colours. Two Castles enter. The Pieces form line and again receive the Bishops' blessing.

Enter the Red Queen, a weak personality, followed by the Red King, a nervous, shrinking, tottering old man. The Red King drags himself slowly and painfully to his throne and takes his seat. The Pieces, now set in battle array, await the onset.

Some Black Pieces, led by the Black Queen, begin the attack. The Red King shows alarm at the vicious thrusts with which she seeks a weak point in his line. She makes her decision and boldly advances. The Red Pieces waver and the Red King advances a Bishop to stem the assault. In vain, the Bishop is swept backwards, and the King moves forward a second Bishop. Seeing the King hard pressed and fearful, the Red Queen advances in his defence and pleads that he may be spared. But the pitiless Black Queen contemptuously gives her to one of her Knights.

Now the Red Knight who loves the Black Queen springs to the defence of his sovereign. A terrible struggle ensues. The Red King watches with intense anxiety, his spirits rising and falling as the victory sways from one side to the other, for he well knows that his fate is linked to the outcome.

This time it would appear that the Black Queen has met her match, for now the Red Knight drives her back, beats down her sword, and presently forces her to her knees. He raises his weapon to deal the final blow, but stays his hand; the King, in an agony of fear lest victory should slip from his grasp, shrieks for the Knight to strike. The Black Queen throws back her head and her lips part in a mysterious, enigmatic smile which changes the ruthless warrior into a

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helpless lover. The Knight lowers his sword; he cannot slay his beloved. But that moment of indecision is fatal, for the Queen treacherously stabs him to death. The King wrings his hands with anguish, he has no illusions as to the sequel.

Enter Death, who waits and watches. The Red Pieces gather up the fallen warrior, and led by Death, file out in sad procession. Only the Red King remains.

The Black Queen returns and finds cruel delight in driving the tottering old King from place to place. He struggles feebly in a contest he knows to be hopeless. But the Queen disdains to kill, he is unworthy of her steel.

She summons her warriors who, armed with staves, gradually bar his every outlet of escape, so that he is fenced in by the relentless Black Pieces. The bitter struggle tells on his worn frame. He gasps and quavers. Then, as he is driven to his throne, he becomes animated with a flash of the fire of his youth and defies his tormentors—a moment later he falls lifeless. It is checkmate.



The game of Chess as a theme for ballet is not an innovation, for there was a *Ballet des Echecs* performed in 1607, at Paris. But such ballets have generally been an attempt to move splendidly apparelled dancers on a gigantic chessboard much in the manner that the game is played. In the present instance, however, the game is not an excuse for a mere *divertissement*, but the basis for a grim and forceful tragedy admirably worked out and deriving additional strength from being invested with a symbolical meaning.

Bliss's music is first-rate and never suggests that it has been written to fit a theme, but rather that it has grown with the development of the story. The music has the rare merit of being original, full of colour and suggestion, and yet always danceable. The only criticisms that might be made are: first, that the Red Knight's solo is too long and must tire even a dancer of Turner's strength; second, that the torturing of

BALLET BY NINETTE DE VALOIS

the Red King at the end of the ballet is too protracted and the climax too long delayed.

The settings by McKnight Kauffer are most effective in conveying the drama of the situation and in conveying a certain eerie suggestion that the Pieces are being directed by a supernatural agency. The costumes, too, are excellent and full of invention, those in red being given variety by the addition of orange, and those in black being heightened with silver. Two of the costumes leave something to be desired: those of the Red Pawns, which have a frivolous character better suited to revue; and those of the Bishops, who are represented as the personification of lethargy and senility, in marked contrast to the swiftly moving attributes of the Piece in a game of Chess. It is possible, however, that the conception of the Bishops may have been deliberately altered to suit the wishes of the choreographer.

De Valois's choreography is in the main excellently composed, and proves once more that she is at her best in the composition of ballets of a tragic or symbolical character, while her powers of invention receive an additional stimulus when the ballet also possesses an intellectual appeal. The concluding scenes which end in the death of the Red King attain considerable heights.

But this is not to say that the work is beyond criticism. For instance, the opening dance of the Pawns is weak and suggests revue rather than ballet. Then, from the psychological aspect, the odds are too heavily in favour of the Black Queen by making both the Red King and the Red Queen such pitiful weaklings. If the latter were possessed of a little more strength, it would add to the nobility of her sacrifice in favour of her consort. Next, the ceremony of blessing the Red Standard is too long. Again, the funeral procession of the Red Knight is inclined to be over-dramatised and is a little too reminiscent of a scene from Jooss's *The Green Table*. Lastly, when the only two Pieces seen to be taken are the Red Queen and the Red Knight, it is a little difficult to grasp why the Red King should be left defenceless; perhaps

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the introduction of a brief black-out to mark the passage of time would make this development appear more logical. These criticisms apart, *Checkmate* is a definite contribution to British Ballet, artistically conceived and presented, and possessed of genuine inspiration. It is a work of importance, worthy to rank beside *Job* and *The Rake's Progress*.

Checkmate was first performed in London at the Sadler's Wells Theatre on October 5th, 1937.

THE PROSPECT BEFORE US

Ballet in 7 Scenes.

Book: Ninette de Valois.

Music: William Boyce, arranged Constant Lambert.

Scenery and costumes: Roger Furse.

Choreography: Ninette de Valois.

First produced: Sadler's Wells Theatre, London, July 4th, 1940.

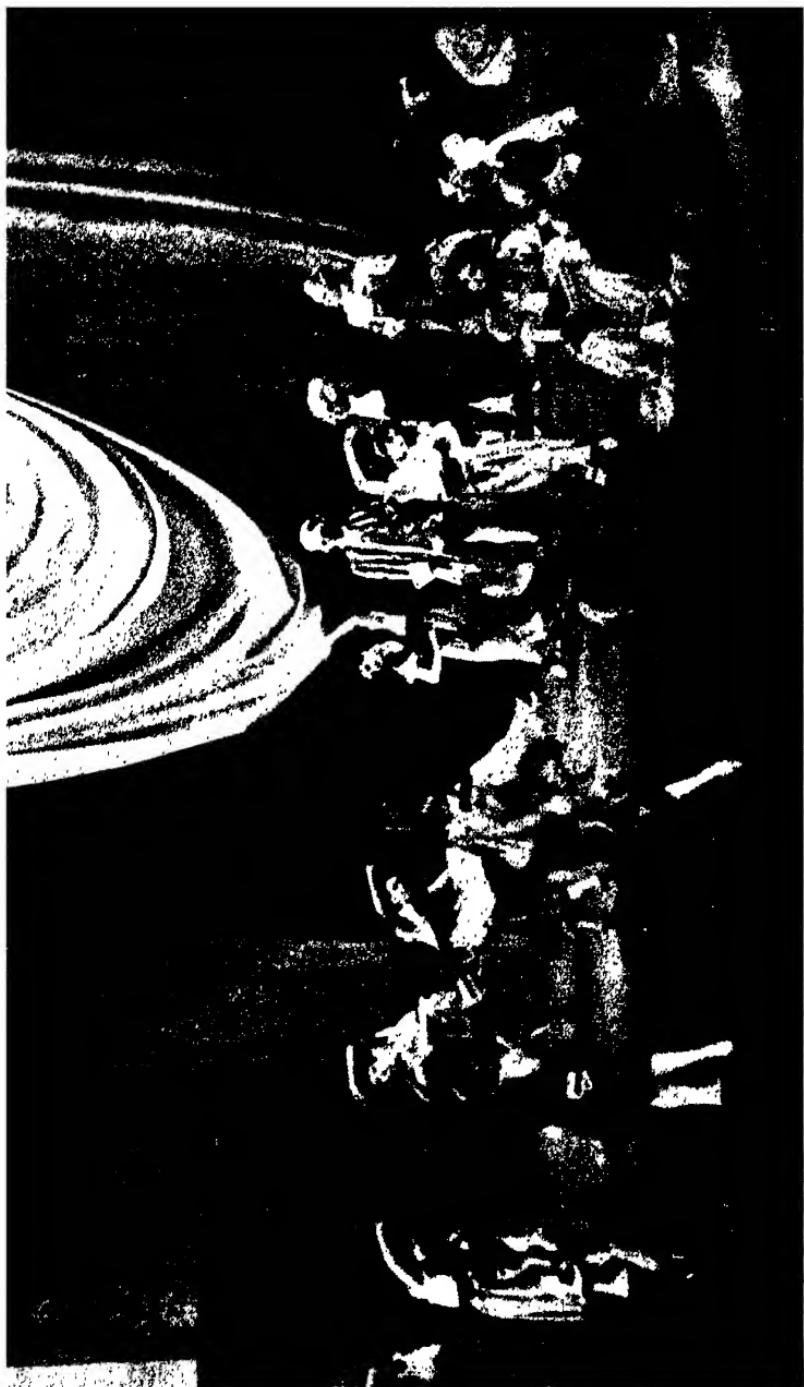
CHARACTERS

Mr. Taylor (Manager of the King's Theatre) . .	Claude Newman
Mr. O'Reilly (Manager of the Pantheon) . . .	Robert Helpmann
Monsieur Noverre (Choreo- grapher and Ballet Master	Frederick Ashton
Madame Noverre . . .	Ursula Moreton
Mademoiselle Théodore (Première Danseuse) . .	Pamela May
Monsieur Didelot . . .	Alan Carter
Monsieur Vestris . . .	John Hart



[Photo: Gordon Anthony]

SCENE FROM "THE PROSPECT BEFORE US", SC. I



BALLET BY NINETTE DE VALOIS

Ladies of the Ballet .	.	Julia Farron ¹ , Palma Nye, Joy Newton, Wenda Horsburgh, Elizabeth Kennedy, Joan Ross, Margaret Williams, Moyra Fraser
Patrons of the Ballet	.	Anne Spicer Leo Young Stanley Hall
Street Urchins	.	Joan Phillips, Guinevere Parry, Mavis Jackson, Jean Bedells, June Vincent, Bunty Kelley
Dancers holding Model of Pantheon . .	.	Annabel Farjeon Dominie Callaghan Deryk Mendel John Field
Two Dancers	.	Molly Brown Patricia Garnett
The Drums . .	.	Leo Young
The Horn . .	.	Paul Reymond ²
A Dancer . .	.	Mary Honer
Cupid . .	.	Margaret Dale
Mr. Taylor's Lawyers	.	Michael Somes Richard Ellis Leslie Edwards Paul Reymond ²
Three Noble Lords .	.	Stanley Hall Leo Young

Scene I. The stage of the King's Theatre, 1789.

The stage, stripped of the glamour of scenery, has a somewhat cheerless aspect, seen in the cold light of day. The background is formed by a few flats stacked against the far wall, a tall pair of steps, and two curtains, one yellow and one white, hung up to keep out the draughts. Before the curtains stand a couple of chairs.

¹ Formerly Joyce Farron.

² Formerly Paul Reyloff.

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When the curtain rises, a ballet rehearsal is in progress. M. Noverre and his wife, seated on chairs in the right foreground, watch, with evident distaste, the movements of the dancers. They compare impressions and, from time to time, the ballet-master rises to correct a step or a pose. Mlle. Théodore enters, but a delay occurs through her experiencing difficulty in finding a pair of shoes to please her.

These proceedings are interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Taylor, the manager, accompanied by several of his patrons, whom he has brought to see a rehearsal. In the rear lurks another visitor, Mr. O'Reilly, the manager of the Pantheon. He is a lean, gloomy-looking, red-nosed individual, with dark pouches under his eyes, who wanders vaguely about, idly quizzing the surroundings through his glass.

The patrons greet their friends in the ballet, while Mr. Taylor, all affability and tact, enlarges on the glories of the forthcoming season. M. Noverre, preoccupied with the mental visualisation of a new dance, is a little testy on being interrupted to receive the compliments of the visitors.

Now Mlle. Théodore begins a *pas de deux* with Didelot, but suddenly stops, draws him aside, and complains of the way he supports her. Didelot, shocked and resentful, turns his back.

M. Noverre calls on Vestris to render his *pas seul*. The famous dancer, having imperiously swept aside the *corps de ballet*, takes up the position for his entrance, but, instead of dancing, calmly walks "down stage," merely indicating by the movement of his hands the steps he will do.

The visitors take their leave escorted by Mr. Taylor. He returns just as the rehearsal ends. M. Noverre seizes the opportunity to discuss his contract in the hope of obtaining better terms. Mr. Taylor, badgered in turn by the ballet master and his wife, accedes to their demands, whereupon they leave in triumph.

The manager, catching sight of O'Reilly, becomes expansive and offers him a box for the season. Then, leading him to the distant pair of chairs, Mr. Taylor produces glasses and a

bottle of wine, which he presses upon his companion, the while he tries to cheer him with amusing anecdotes and sundry claps on the back. For a time, Mr. O'Reilly seems indifferent to these attentions, then, suddenly taking fire, he slaps Mr. Taylor's back in turn, and, leaping to his feet, responds with lively stories of his own, after which he blithely takes his departure. Mr. Taylor is left to ponder.

Scene II. The Burning of the King's Theatre.

The curtain rises to disclose an act-drop based on Rowlandson's drawing representing the burning of the King's Theatre. We see a section of the auditorium with the conductor still valiantly wielding his baton despite a menacing spout of smoke from the pit. Charred laths and a torn curtain are seen hurtling from the ceiling, while a woman jumps from the upper gallery. Other members of the audience, half surprised and half terrified, struggle furiously to gain the exits.

Amid this scene of destruction, Mr. Taylor runs vainly to and fro, alternately clasping his fevered brow, wringing his hands in despair, or raging at his powerlessness to prevent the complete ruin of his plans. Meanwhile, his dancers forsake him, first Noverre, then Théodore, Didelot, and Vestris, snared by the seductive offers held out by Mr. O'Reilly. At last, Mr. Taylor, gives up the contest, flings himself on his back and in utter despair draws his knees to his chin.

Scene III. A London street in a poor quarter: a pink and grey façade, relieved by the spectacle of a blowsy woman peering from behind a first-floor window.

A party of ragged urchins gambol in the street, jumping, playing leap-frog, turning cartwheels, shouting, and pointing. They are succeeded by some of the luckless dancers from the King's Theatre. Mr. O'Reilly tries to obtain much-needed funds to enable him to reopen his own theatre, the Pantheon, by appealing to the sympathy of the public. Some dancers carry in a large pasteboard model of the Pantheon, inscribed

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Pray Remember the Poor Dancers. One, dressed in red velvet, displays her skill, and attention is drawn to the demonstration by a man blowing a horn, who bears on his back a pair of kettle-drums which are beaten lustily by a friend.

Scene IV. The stage of the Pantheon on the Opening Night of the Season.

A false stage box on the left is occupied by Mr. O'Reilly, with M. and Mme. Noverre; that on the right has Mr. Taylor for tenant; for Mr. O'Reilly, not to be outdone in courtesy, has bestowed a box on his unfortunate rival. The stage setting represents a pastoral scene: an expanse of fields broken by a rustic bridge, with a farmhouse and cart in the middle distance.

The spectacle in progress is a *ballet villageois*. There is an *ensemble* by M. Vestris and the ladies of the ballet, followed by a *pas de deux* by Mlle. Théodore and M. Didelot, which portrays the wooing of a maid by a youth, whose suit is furthered by the attentions of a charming Cupid.

Mr. O'Reilly and his companions preen themselves on the enthusiastic reception accorded this *divertissement*, while Mr. Taylor is almost beside himself with mortification at the sight of his artistes bringing fame and profit to his rival.

Scene V. The stage of the New King's Theatre, 1790 (same as Scene I).

Mr. Taylor's friends have rallied to his assistance, and a new King's Theatre has been erected on the site of the old.

The curtain rises on a business conference. Mr. O'Reilly's venture has ended in disaster, and he is now eager to be rid of his dancers and freed of a formidable file of unpaid bills. The dancers, too, are anxious to return where their appointments are sure. But Mr. Taylor's lawyers observe that authority will not sanction the transfer to the King's of the patent granted to the Pantheon. The discomfited artistes are forced to return to the Pantheon, dragging with them the hapless O'Reilly.



[Photo: Gordon Anthony]

SCENE FROM "ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE, ACT I, SC. II



BALLET BY NINETTE DE VALOIS

Scene VI. The burning of the Pantheon (same as Scene II).

By a strange throw of Fortune's wheel, it is now the Pantheon's turn to be destroyed by fire. But Mr. O'Reilly watches the blaze with delight, since it affords him a happy release from his mounting cares. Indeed, when Mr. Taylor appears, he presses upon him dancer after dancer, so eager is he to be rid of his troubles. When he is finally left alone, he flings himself on his back, draws his knees to his chin, and hugs himself with glee.

Scene VII. The stage of the New King's Theatre (same as Scene V).

The company, back under their old manager, are busily engaged in rehearsing a ballet under the direction of M. Noverre. The lawyers arrive to inform the company of the excellent status of the new venture, and this happy augury for the future is completed by the entry of Mr. Taylor and his patrons, exchanging tokens of mutual confidence and esteem.

Suddenly this harmonious atmosphere is shattered by the arrival of Mr. O'Reilly, who, clothes awry and minus his wig, has clearly been celebrating in no uncertain fashion his release from debt. The whole assembly is scandalised by Mr. O'Reilly's outrageous behaviour. Worse still, when his former artistes begin to censure him for his conduct, he retaliates by offensively burlesquing their several manners of dancing until, exhausted, he falls to the ground. The indignant company depart, leaving the two managers alone.

Mr. Taylor helps his companion to a seat, and produces glasses and a bottle of wine. Mr. O'Reilly, befogged, attempts to pour out a bumper, but only succeeds in emptying the bottle over himself. Then, in a fresh access of gaiety, he clasps the bottle to his breast and staggers from the room.

Mr. Taylor is left to ponder.



The Prospect Before Us has some affinities with *The Rake's Progress* in that it, too, is set in the eighteenth century and

derives its "local colour" from the works of another contemporary English satirical painter—William Hogarth being exchanged for the equally caustic but livelier Thomas Rowlandson. The present ballet derives its name from the latter's well-known engraving, "The Prospect Before Us," which depicts—from the viewpoint of the stage—Mlle. Théodore and M. Didelot dancing *a pas de deux* from the mythological ballet *Amphion and Thalia*, before a crowded audience at the Pantheon. Rowlandson's drawings are not only the inspiration of Furse's settings but also prompt the mood for the more riotous scenes in this production.

The "book" is founded on the financial and other difficulties of two rival managers, each of whom in turn loses his theatre by fire. These events actually occurred and the curious will find them detailed in John Ebers's *Seven Years of the King's Theatre*, published in 1828. It would be difficult to imagine a less promising foundation for a ballet scenario than this story of some complicated business negotiations, yet de Valois has most adroitly worked up this material into an original and entertaining ballet, by the interpolation of vignettes of a dancer's life in the late eighteenth century, both at rehearsal and during an actual performance at the theatre.

Scene I affords a genuine, if fleeting, impression of a ballet in rehearsal, complete with authentic examples of the dancer's wiles and temperament. But two matters call for comment. First, it is not quite clear why Helpmann as O'Reilly should seek to provoke laughter by such methods as pretending to stumble over dancers resting on the stage, and from prolonged quizzing and tapping of the proscenium frame; one would expect the appearance of a stage during rehearsal to offer little of novelty to the manager of a theatre. Second, Ashton's portrait of Noverre, with his rosy cheeks and gracious manner, seems far removed from the famous choreographer, at this time a lean, dried-up, irascible martinet of sixty-one, who thought nothing of "booting" a super for talking "in the wings."

Scene III is full of robust humour and here again musicians are effectively introduced as in *The Rake's Progress*. But in this episode Mr. O'Reilly becomes almost too irresponsible with his passion for bottom-slapping and pulling-up his dancers' skirts. Such a fantastic public exhibition, on the part of a presumably esteemed manager, is surely a curious method of arousing public sympathy and financial help for dancers suddenly deprived of their livelihood!

Scene IV, which recalls a drawing from Pugin and Rowlandson's *Microcosm of London*, begins auspiciously. The glimpse of the interior of the Pantheon, with its two stage boxes, together with the pastoral setting and opening number danced by Vestris and the *corps de ballet* presents a charming picture, and really does bring to life something of eighteenth century ballet, so far as it can be visualised from a study of contemporary prints. But the succeeding dance by Mlle. Théodore and Didelot is out of harmony with the period and indifferently composed.

The upper stage boxes are filled with painted figures, the lower ones with real people. Mr. O'Reilly and his friends occupy one box, his *vis-à-vis* is Mr. Taylor. But Helpmann's behaviour as O'Reilly suggests the rowdy leader of a party of undergraduates on boat-race night, rather than a manager rejoicing in the success of his venture. Incidentally, this over-emphasis of what is obviously intended to be subdued by-play, destroys the balance of the scene by detracting the attention of the audience from the stage proper.

Scene V includes a well-arranged dance by Mr. Taylor's lawyers, in which the legal manner is parodied with wit and insight.

Scene VI suffers a little from being largely a duplicate of Scene II.

The final scene, in certain respects a repetition of Scene I, contains the best number of all, the comic burlesque dance by Helpmann, an admirable blend of satire and characterisation, in which the dancing is in itself mimetic. Helpmann's brilliant rendering, with its hair-trigger timing and convincing

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suggestion of spontaneous exuberance abruptly contrasted with moments of grotesque depression, invariably rouses the spectators to an outburst of well-merited applause.

But when the curtain has fallen for the last time on the ballet, members of the audience will certainly ask themselves one question. To what extent does the stage O'Reilly resemble the actual person? On that point, like Mr. Taylor, they have good reason to ponder.

ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE

Ballet in 2 Acts and 4 Scenes.

Book: after R. de' Calzabizi.

Music: C. W. Gluck.

Scenery and costumes: Sophie Fedorovich.

First produced: New Theatre, London, May 28th, 1941.

CHARACTERS

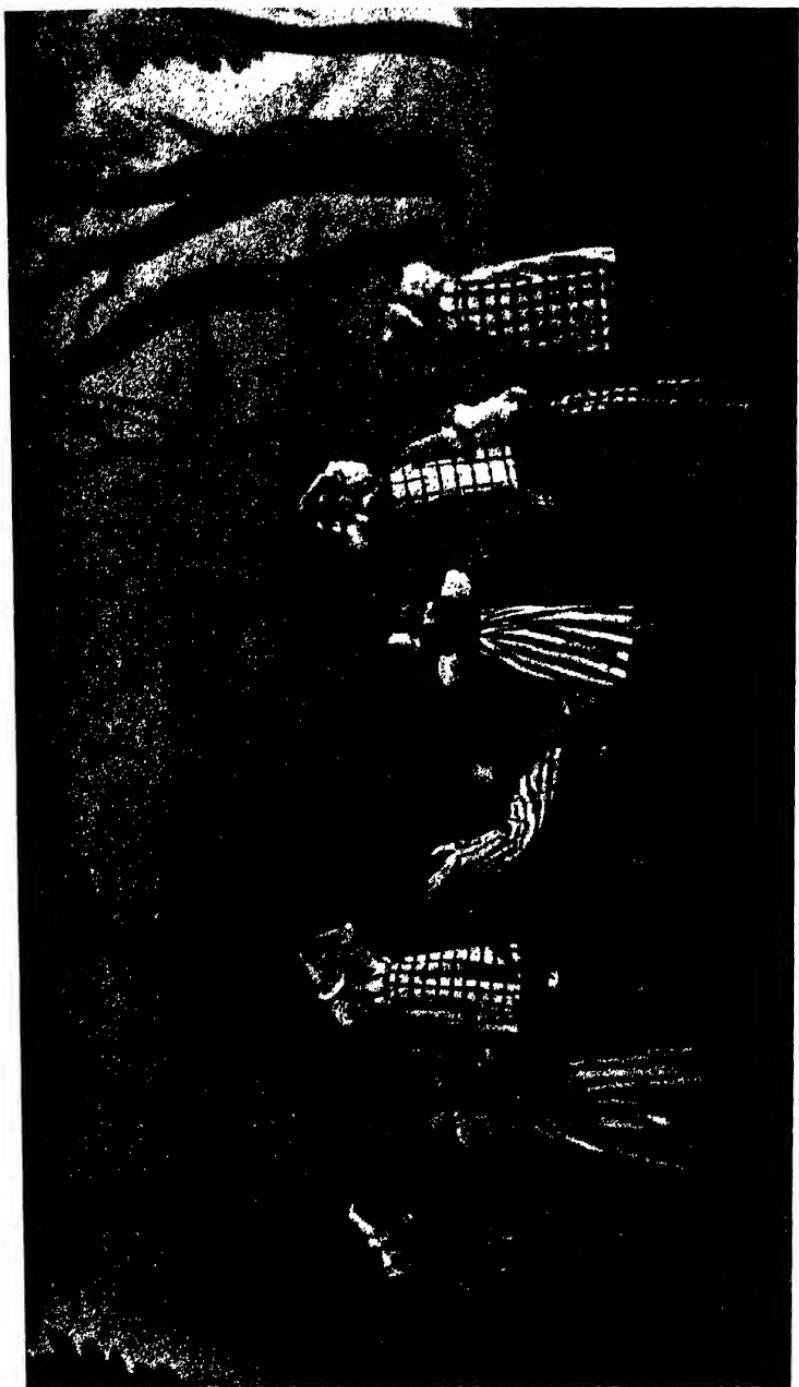
Orpheus	Robert Helpmann
Eurydice	Pamela May
Love	Margot Fonteyn
Leader of the Furies	Mary Honer
Peasants	{ John Hart Julia Farron ¹
Mourners, Furies, Spirits, Dancers, Children.	

Act I. Scene I. The Tomb of Eurydice.

This setting, like those of the succeeding scenes, is expressed in the simplest symbolic terms. Against the centre back of a neutral-tinted background and suspended in mid-air from two white cords, depending vertically from the "flies," is a folded length of black gauze looped up to form a giant swag.

¹ June Brae was originally cast for this role but, owing to illness, was unable to appear at the first performance.





SCENE FROM "PROMENADE"

[Photo: Gordon Anthony]

A little before the space enclosed by the swag is a short flight of steps. Beyond the steps, and in the same line, is a low block of stone, which marks the grave of Eurydice. The general lighting is a pale steely grey-blue.

The curtain rises on the mourning rites held in memory of Orpheus's wife, Eurydice. On the topmost step stands the God of Love, veiled in black. Orpheus and the mourners are grouped about the tomb upon which he has placed his lyre.

Two of the mourners, dressed in black and white, dance sadly with white flowers in their hands. The other mourners, dressed in white, glide slowly to and fro, trailing after them black mourning scarves. From time to time Orpheus gives heartbroken cries of "Eurydice!"

The rites ended, the mourners place on the tomb, first, the flowers, then the black scarves. Oppressed with his sense of utter loneliness, Orpheus begs the mourners to leave him. They accede to his request.

Alone, he sings with rising emotion of his loneliness. In despair, his sorrow changes to anger and he cries out against the gods who have robbed him of his beloved. He entreats, nay demands, that she shall be restored to him. He will enter Hades itself to bring her back to Earth.

The God of Love takes off his veil and informs him that the gods have heard his prayer and resolved to grant his wish, but, in order to gain entrance to the infernal regions, it will be his task to charm with his singing the Furies who guard them.

Orpheus is overjoyed, but the God of Love bids him be patient, for the gods have added a condition to their gift. Orpheus readily agrees to submit himself to this test. The God of Love then makes known the condition—Orpheus may not look upon his wife until he has brought her back to earth. He is horrified at the subtle cruelty of this trial, but resolves to make the attempt to recover his beloved Eurydice. As he departs on his mission the God of Love slowly ascends to his position at the head of the steps.

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Act I. Scene II. The Entrance to Hades.

The setting consists of a backcloth painted to suggest the glare of yellow firelight looming through a pall of smoke.

When the curtain rises, the Furies are seen dancing before the entrance to Hades. Fused into one pulsating mass, they offer a menacing aspect with their dark tunics and nodding horned heads, as they beat out a sinister rhythm, their bared arms and legs flashing in the flickering firelight.

Enter Orpheus. The Furies bid him begone, but, taking his lyre, he sings to them of his grievous loss and beseeches them to grant him passage. They refuse and menace him when he approaches. He renews his pleading and so charms them with his voice, that finally they allow him to escape from their grasp, their hands lifted in a parting greeting.

Act II. Scene I. The Elysian Fields.

The setting consists entirely of gauze curtains, the whole screened by a gauze act-drop.

The music which precedes the raising of the stage curtain produces an extraordinary effect of serenity and celestial purity.

As the curtain rises, the heavenly spirits, in diaphanous robes, are seen dancing slowly. They appear wraith-like seen through the gauze act-drop. Orpheus enters and passes across the act-drop. Then he is seen returning, this time behind the act-drop.

At first he seems overcome by the radiance of this blessed spot, but even here he cannot forget the loss of his cherished Eurydice. Anxiously he searches for her, but in vain. He turns to the Spirits and begs them to conduct him to her. Now the God of Love appears and leading him to Eurydice, joins their hands. Orpheus, plucking his lyre, sings of his gratitude and prepares to return to the upper world. As he walks on, always averting his face, Eurydice follows behind him.

The scene ends with the lowering of a drop-curtain depicting a lyre borne on a cloud; the background is yellow.

Act II. Scene II. The Return to Earth.

This setting is similar to that of Act I, Scene I, except that the swag is now white, instead of black, while the tomb and steps are omitted. The lighting is grey blue.

This scene opens with a dance of peasants, dressed in apricot-coloured dresses, white tunics, and white hats. This is followed by a dance rendered by two youthful lovers. When they, too, have passed from view, they are succeeded by a group of children who frolic in the sunlight.

Now Orpheus enters, gently leading his Eurydice back to Earth. Alas, she cannot understand his apparent indifference to their reunion. She can scarcely credit her deliverer to be that husband who always loved her so passionately. He seems a creature of stone, not flesh. Not once has he embraced her and even sought her lips to kiss them. He has not uttered a single word of love. She fears he loves her no longer.

She clings to him, caresses him, presses her yielding body against his, but always he remains cold and aloof, his gaze averted. Orpheus, racked by the agony of this almost unbearable situation, grimly hurries her on to their destination. But her pleading becomes so poignant, her disappointment so intense, that his assumed indifference breaks down. In a frenzy of passion he takes her in his arms and looks upon her dear features. That same instant she is bereft of life. At once the Furies burst upon the scene and fling themselves upon the body of Eurydice, eager to bear it back to Hades. Orpheus, horrified at the consequences of his act and broken with remorse, staggers from the scene.



Orpheus and Eurydice is Gluck's well-known opera, first performed on October 5th, 1762, at the Burgtheater, Vienna, now presented as a ballet in four scenes and danced to orchestra and three solo voices. This is probably the first time the opera has been presented purely as a ballet. It may be of interest, however, to record that the opera was produced by V. Meyerhold at the Maryinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg, on December 21st, 1911, with the addition of many striking ballets by

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Michel Fokine, also responsible for the grouping of the singers who, in that revival, appeared on the stage.

The libretto of *Orpheus*, by R. de' Calzabizi, is adapted from the Greek tragedy, but while the opera is provided with a happy ending in that Amor (Love), out of pity for Orpheus's love and constancy, restores Eurydice to life, the ballet adheres to the original tragic conclusion.

The costumes and settings by Sophie Fedorovich are conceived in the simplest terms. The costumes are modernised versions of the antique mode, the settings are for the most part symbolic drapings of gauze, which not only confer an appropriate austerity, but also, particularly in the case of the representation of the Elysian Fields, evoke a chaste ethereal mood which is mentally uplifting in its effect on the spectator.

Orpheus and Eurydice is obviously a production to which Miss de Valois has devoted much time and thought. Its chief weakness lies in the dramatic theme, which is insufficient to be spread over four scenes, so that there is a point in each, when one receives the impression that the action is being deliberately prolonged to fill out the music. This is especially noticeable in the opening scene.

The choreographic plan includes elements of several techniques; conventional gesture for the mimed episodes; barefoot technique combined with the Central European school in the Entrance to Hades; classical ballet in the Elysian Fields; and *demi-caractère* for the children's dances in the Return to Earth. The most effective scenes are the "*Dance of the Furies*," which whets the appetite rather than satisfies it, as it conjures up the smoke-blackened guardians of the Infernal Regions, dancing amid billowing fume and the fitful glow of leaping fires; and the final *pas de deux* of Orpheus and Eurydice, with the poignant suffering of Eurydice, who cannot understand her husband's heartless neglect of her. When this dance is rendered with the grace and deep appreciation of the situation accorded it by Pamela May, it rises to the heights of pure poetry.

The experiment of employing dancers to mime actions

BALLET BY NINETTE DE VALOIS

sung by unseen singers is interesting, but rarely successful. Even when the synchronisation is perfect, the method of dual expressiveness has a superfluous quality about it, for if the singing is sufficiently expressive in itself, the visual representation of the action seems redundant, and vice versa. The most serious objection, however, is that the opportunities for dancing are not only restricted but often of necessity eliminated, in order to fit an alphabet of expressive movements of the arms and body to the action described by the singer. Finally, it must be stated that the movements are sometimes dwarfed by the dignity and grandeur of Gluck's music.

PROMENADE

Music: Haydn, arranged by Edwin Evans, and, in part, orchestrated by Gordon Jacob.

Scenery and costumes: Hugh Stevenson.

Choreography: Ninette de Valois.

First produced: King's Theatre, Edinburgh, October 25th, 1943.

CHARACTERS

The Lepidopterist	Gordon Hamilton
Entrée	{ Joan Sheldon, Margaret Dale, Jill Gregory, Mavis Jackson, Anne Lascelles ¹ , Guinevere Parry, Wenda Horsburgh
Les Merveilleuses	{ Julia Farron Jean Bedells Moyra Fraser Leslie Edwards
Rendez-vous	{ Beryl Grey David Paltenghi
Promenade	Pauline Clayden

¹Formerly Sheila Fleming.

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Pas de Trois . . .	Moira Shearer Alexis Rassine Ray Powell
Danse des Paysannes . . .	Peggy van Praagh, June Vincent, Franklin White, Celia Franca, Palma Nye, Lorna Mossford, P. Dunning, E. Kennedy, Wenda Horsburgh
Finale	Full Company

The ballet begins with a lively overture, almost martial in quality, but varied with gay trills and flourishes, and scored with brazen hunting-calls which speedily establish a mood of rural gaiety.

The curtain rises on a woodland glade, presumably in some corner of Brittany. It is a pallid landscape, a row of equally spaced slender brown tree-trunks whose heads are lost to view in a milky sky. Almost the only note of bright colour is a pink swing seat suspended from a branch. The stage is empty except for the centre, where a soberly clad Lepidopterist or Butterfly-hunter—to judge from the butterfly-net which lies close beside him—reclines on his back, consulting a large book.

A diversion is provided by the entry of a crocodile of six young ladies shepherded by their governess. They wear poke-bonnets and high-waisted dresses of the Consulate period. The governess sits on the chair and dozes while her charges indulge in simple dances. From time to time the young ladies tease the Butterfly-hunter until, his attention attracted by a butterfly, he rises and hurries off in pursuit. Presently the governess gives the signal for departure, the young ladies reform their crocodile and trip demurely away into the woods.

The Butterfly-hunter returns and going to the table resumes the study of his book. From the left-hand corner of the wood comes a dashing young infantry officer in blue and white. From the opposite corner enter two *merveilleuses*, both in white, one wearing a pale green overskirt, the other adorned with a bright green sash. They carry fans which they flutter

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archly for the officer's benefit. Soon they are joined by a third *merveilleuse*, this time in pale pink. The officer greets the three ladies and dances with each in turn, while reciprocating their obvious interest in his engaging personality. As they dance, the absent-minded bespectacled Butterfly-hunter threads his way in and out of their midst in pursuit of some new quarry. As the dancers leave, the Butterfly-hunter crosses the glade, perusing his book.

The next number, "*Rendez-vous*," is a typical stolen meeting between two lovers—a young girl in a dress striped blue and white, and contrasted with a brown velvet jacket, and a romantic-looking young man—a very Lucien de Rubempré—who appears to have posted to the tryst to judge by his long coat and riding-boots. Their dance is expressive of their mutual love. Soon it is time to part and the young man leaves with many a backward glance over his shoulder. The young girl, overcome with an overpowering sense of loneliness, is filled with sorrow. But her lover unexpectedly returns, once more to take her into his arms for a final embrace before posting on his way. The Butterfly-hunter again crosses the stage.

Now follows "*Promenade*," a *pas seul* danced by a young girl dressed in a coral pink bodice and white dress decorated with a few *appliquéd* garlands of blue ribbon. It is a strange, almost coltish dance, presumably representative of a young girl's emergence from girlhood. Her mind is filled with conflicting emotions—half-formed thoughts of love, of ambition, of vague fears, to be reflected in her movements, which become alternately fussy, exaggerated, gauche—but before any movement reaches its logical completion, a new one is begun, to be as speedily rejected in favour of another. During her dance the young ladies, the lovers, and the officer in turn cross her path, but they are too pre-occupied with their own affairs to notice her. Presently the Butterfly-hunter, in pursuit of a new prize, crawls past her. She makes fun of him, whereupon he sternly reproves her and slaps her cheek. Overcome with surprise she falls down in a sitting posture. Then, rising to her feet, she exits, shaking her head in disdain.

The next number is "*Pas de Trois*," in which age and youth compete for the hand of a peasant girl, the manœuvres of her suitors being frequently interrupted by the entrance of the Butterfly-hunter, intent on some new prize. While the youth dances with the girl, the old man is confronted by the Butterfly-hunter who succeeds in interesting him in his hobby. Indeed, the Butterfly-hunter so far presumes on the goodwill of his new acquaintance as to jump on his back in order to wield his net to better purpose. The naturalist, carried thus and escorted by the youth and the girl, vanishes with them into the woods.

Almost immediately the glade is invaded by a group of Breton peasants in picturesque costumes—village girls in gaily-checked dresses and coloured aprons led by an old sailor in red jacket and wide-brimmed straw hat. Moving with light steps and little jumps, they perform some of the local dances, now moving in lines, now in circles, which alternately contract and expand. At this point the earlier visitors return—the young ladies from the nearby academy, the *merveilleuses* escorted by the young officer, the romantic couple, and the ill-assorted trio—to join the peasants on this festive occasion and dance figure after figure until just when the eye is almost dazzled by the whirling dresses and aprons of every colour the dancers abruptly disperse in varied directions, leaving the Butterfly-hunter reclining on his back, consulting his book, as at the rise of the curtain.



Promenade is danced to a group of attractive movements from Haydn's piano and orchestral works, selected and arranged by the late Edwin Evans. Stevenson's setting is frankly anæmic for a painter with his feeling for colour; the best costumes are those for the peasants in the concluding *ensembles*.

Promenade is a series of *divertissements* linked together by the aimless wanderings of an absent-minded butterfly-hunter, and doubtless the production was planned to provide an alternative curtain-raiser to Ashton's *Les Rendez-vous*.





SCENE FROM "LES RENDEZ-VOUS"

[Photo: *Merlyn Steven*]

BALLET BY NINETTE DE VALOIS

The individual dances are not particularly distinguished, although "*Rendez-vous*" and "*Promenade*" have their moments, these depending greatly on the expressiveness of their interpreters. The most effective numbers are the two spirited *ensembles*, "*Danse des Paysannes*" and "*Finale*," which Miss de Valois based on authentic Breton steps and figures, communicated to her by Monsieur J. de Cadenet, an authority on the Folk Dances of Brittany.

The "*Pas de Trois*," an adaptation of a character dance theme by Filippo Taglioni, in which a handsome country youth and an ugly clumsy one compete for the hand of a village belle, the theme of the ballet *La Fille Mal Gardée* reduced to a dance, has been altered—to my mind not for the better—so that the hobbledehoy becomes a near-sighted old aristocrat complete with quizzing-glass, the possibilities of which property have already been exhaustively exploited by Mr. O'Reilly in *The Prospect Before Us*.

The Butterfly-hunter and the Aristocrat arouse a measure of suspicion as to their true identities, because, while the former, for the best part of his role, appears from his actions to be a short-sighted feeble old man, he is able at the end of the "*Pas de Trois*" to leap with the ease of a grasshopper on to the back of the Aristocrat who, although previously apparently an old gentleman not too sure of his legs, sustains the shock of this sudden additional burden with the ease of the ground member of a troupe of acrobats.

BALLET'S BY FREDERICK ASHTON

FAÇADE

Ballet in 1 Act.

Book: freely adapted from poems by Edith Sitwell.

Music: William Walton.

Scenery and costumes: John Armstrong.

Choreography: Frederick Ashton.

*First produced with present setting: Sadler's Wells Theatre,
London, July 23rd, 1940.*

CHARACTERS

Scotch Rhapsody	.	.	Guinevere Parry Molly Brown Claude Newman
Noche Espagnole	.	.	Frederick Ashton
Yodelling Song:			
The Milk Maid	.	.	Julia Farron Michael Somes
Mountaineers	.	.	John Hart Richard Ellis
Polka	.	.	Margot Fonteyn
Foxtrot	.	.	June Brae, Pamela May, Robert Helpmann, Frederick Ashton
Waltz	.	.	Anne Spicer, Julia Farron, Palma Nye, Moyra Fraser
Popular Song	.	.	Richard Ellis John Hart
Country Dance:			
A Maiden	.	.	Mary Honer
A Yokel	.	.	Michael Somes
The Squire	.	.	Robert Helpmann
Tango:			
A Dago	.	.	Frederick Ashton

BALLET BY FREDERICK ASHTON

A Débutante	.	Margot Fonteyn
Tarantella Finale	.	{ Margot Fonteyn, Frederick Ashton, and Ensemble

Scene. The façade of a suburban villa. Framed in the window of a ground floor sitting-room is a well-corsetted female toying with a flower. To the left of the house is a length of iron railings above which stretches a clothes-line decorated with some intimate garments flapping against a background of bright blue sky.

The present version of *Façade* is a series of ten humorous *divertissements*. It begins with "Scotch Rhapsody," a *pas de trois* rendered by a Scotsman and two lassies, the steps and movements being based on the Highland Fling.

"Noche Espagnole" is a burlesque¹ of a South American gigolo, incredibly dapper, agile, and light in his slinking steps and deft high kicks; feminine in the insinuating movements of his arms and hands. His sleek black hair shines like lacquer, while his features fascinate with their long side whiskers and moustache shaved to a curved hair line. His shallow raffishness is revealed in his loud striped suit with shirt to match.

"Yodelling Song" is a cleverly contrived suggestion of a milkmaid's setting forth to milk a cow, later impersonated by her lively companions; the conclusion of her task is celebrated in a lively dance, some of the steps being based on those of the Bavarian Schuhplättler.

The "Polka" is a vivacious solo dance *sur les pointes* which requires a technical brilliance and a particularly refined style for its presentation.

"Fox-Trot" suggests a vignette from a dance-hall open to the public at very popular prices.

"Valse" is an attractive *pas de quatre*, a light parody of a débutantes' dance as it might be in an Edwardian musical comedy, with the addition of a series of original and very elaborate arm movements.

¹It is also a gentle satire on pseudo-Spanish dances such as Dolin's "Bolero."

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“*Popular Song*” is a burlesque of an American tap dance duo; one of those clockwork-like dances which, based on a series of recurring sequences, seem as if they could go on for ever, and in which the movements of one dancer are the exact reflection of those of his partner.

“*Country Dance*” is a comedy number, the protagonists being a village maiden, a yokel, and a country squire.

“*Tango*” is another dance-hall episode, the dancers being of a more fashionable type. A dago in a flashy evening dress exercises his fascination on a débutante anxious to see life, but a little doubtful of the propriety of her partner’s holds and of the dance movements to which he introduces her.

The ballet ends in a final *ensemble*.



Façade was the name given to an unusual entertainment for voice and six instruments. It consisted of a group of poems by Edith Sitwell recited through a mask containing an amplifier to a musical accompaniment composed by William Walton. The verses are contrived to popular dance rhythms, to which Walton gave point and colour by the wit of his orchestration. *Façade* was first performed at the *Æolian Hall*, London, on June 12th, 1923. Later, several of the numbers were arranged to form an orchestral suite, which is used for the present ballet and from which it derives its name. Curiously enough, the first person to see the possibilities of the music as a score for ballet was a young German choreographer, Günter Hess, who produced his ballet with his own Chamber Dance Theatre at Hagen, Westphalia, 1930.

Ashton originally composed his ballet for the Camargo Society, the work being produced at the Cambridge Theatre, London, on April 26th, 1931; the principal dancers were Lydia Lopokova, Alicia Markova, Pearl Argyle, Diana Gould, Maude Lloyd, Prudence Hyman, Frederick Ashton, William Chappell and Walter Gore. The first conception consisted of seven *divertissements*, then called “*Scotch Rhapsody*” (now entitled “*Ecossaise*”), “*Yodelling Song*” (now styled “*Tyrolienne*”),

“*Polka*,” “*Valse*,” “*Popular Song*,” “*Tango Pasodoble*” and “*Tarantella Sevillana*.” In 1935, when this ballet was first added to the repertory of the Sadler’s Wells Ballet, a new number, “*Country Dance*,” was added. When the company visited Holland in 1940, only narrowly escaping the oncoming tide of the German invasion, they lost both setting and costumes for this among other ballets. *Façade*, however, was revived in July of that year with a new setting and costumes by Armstrong, when two more new numbers were added: “*Noche Espagnole*” (now called “*Nocturne Peruvienne*”) and “*Foxtrot*.”

As first presented the ballet was chic, very frivolous, and as light as a chocolate éclair. “*Tango*” and “*Popular Song*” were obviously derived from the music-hall, but the greater part of the ballet had a freshness and gaiety which made *Façade* an exhilarating and delightful entertainment. Something of this atmosphere is still retained in the version presented by the Ballet Rambert, which follows the original choreographic plan and retains the first setting and costumes.

The three new numbers added to the current Wells’ version do not improve the ballet, although “*Noche Espagnole*” is an amusing burlesque. Unfortunately, the latest dancer¹ of this role hovers in the background during the “*Ecossaise*,” slinking to and fro, and flashing the rings on his fingers, thus completely “killing” the opening *pas de trois*.

The new setting is not an improvement on the old, and Ally Sloper has long since exhausted the humorous possibilities of underwear hanging on a clothes-line. Why, too, should the dancer of the “*Polka*” be made to appear wearing knickers and an old-fashioned pair of corsets? The designer’s sense of values must be at fault if he has to substitute this type of humour for the wit of his first design.

Can it be that the new setting and costumes have adversely affected the spirit of the dances themselves? It cannot be denied by anyone who has seen both the original and the current presentation, that what was once so bright and gay is fast becoming a little cheap, not to say crude.

¹Robert Helpmann.

THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

LES RENDEZ-VOUS

Ballet Divertissement in 1 Scene.

Music: Auber, arranged by Constant Lambert.

Scenery and costumes: William Chappell.

Choreography: Frederick Ashton.

First produced with present setting¹ and costumes: Sadler's Wells Theatre, London, November 16th, 1937.

CHARACTERS

Entrance of Walkers-Out	{ Jill Gregory, Frederick Ashton, Claude Newman, Pamela May, June Brae, Anne Spicer, Gwyneth Mathews, Joan Leaman, Palma Nye, Richard Ellis, Leslie Edwards, Michael Somes, Paul Reymond, Alan Carter
Pas de Quatre	{ Molly Brown, Guinevere Parry, Julia Farron, Laurel Martyn
Variation	Harold Turner
Adagio of Lovers	{ Margot Fonteyn Harold Turner
Pas de Trois	{ Jill Gregory Frederick Ashton Claude Newman
Variation	Margot Fonteyn
Pas de Six	{ Claude Newman, Richard Ellis, Leslie Edwards, Alan Carter, Michael Somes, Paul Reymond
Exit of those walking out	

Scene. The entrance to a private park. The background is formed by a stretch of tall railing, painted white, broken by a

¹This ballet was originally produced on December 5th, 1933, with Markova and Idzikowsky in the principal roles, and Ninette de Valois, Stanley Judson, and Robert Helpmann in the *Pas de Trois*.

pair of white gates, appropriately decorated with crossed arrows, opened to reveal a green landscape; overhead is a blue summer sky relieved with white clouds.

After a preliminary fanfare on trumpets, a number of young people—girls in white dresses crossed with a pink sash and young men in white tights and tunics, bound with a light-blue belt—begin successively to arrive, always from one or other of the four corners. The final couple make their entrance through the gates, to be welcomed by their companions. All exit and there follows a *pas de deux* by the leading couple, in which the *danseuse*, supported by her partner, executes an *adage*. Their example is presently adopted by the whole company.

Next comes a *Pas de Quatre* danced by four little girls.

This is followed by a *Variation* for the male soloist, a dance based on leaps and *tours en l'air*.

Now comes an *Adage*, which begins with the dancers posed *en arabesque*, after which the girls are lifted gracefully into the air. There are several pleasing groups in which the girls face one way, and the men another. Then the leading couple dance together, at the end of which the *danseuse* is raised in the air by the young men, while the girls, posed *en arabesque*, form a protective circle about her. The male soloist takes a kneeling position outside the circle, his arms outstretched towards the *danseuse*.

Next there is a delightful *Pas de Trois* by two young men and a girl to a lively trumpet accompaniment, in which the dancers enter circling the stage with high *jetés en avant*, the girl half turning first to one side, then the other. Then she dances alternately with either youth, while the other beats *cabrioles* on place. The dance ends with all three moving in a line forwards and backwards, with a lilting movement of the arm to right and left.

This number is succeeded by another *Variation*, a solo for the leading *danseuse*, the main characteristic of which is a double *pirouette* taken with sufficient momentum to carry the body round once more, while the *danseuse* reels in an

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attitude of abandon, concluding with a circling flourish of the wrists.

Follows a *Pas de Six* by six young men, an unusual combination, based on leaps and *tours en l'air*.

The *divertissement* ends with a *Finale* in which the couples prepare to take their leave of each other with a parting kiss. While they dance into the woods, there is a small solo by the leading *danseuse*. Then there is a *variation* for the leading male dancer, based on *petits tours* and *tours en l'air*. Four of the girls return to indulge in a brief dance. There is another short solo by the leading *danseuse* followed by a brilliant series of *petits tours* by her partner. Then the company take their departure, going off in pairs, each dancing with characteristic movements of their own, through the gates and over the broad countryside to home.



Les Rendez-vous is an attractive suite of dances to melodies selected from the ballet music to Auber's *L'Enfant Prodigue*. It begins with the arrival of a succession of young couples and concludes with their departure. The gay white, pink, and blue of the costumes and the freshness, speed, and gaiety of the dances make it an admirable curtain-raiser for a programme of ballet.

The present scenery and costumes are not those of the original production, although they were both designed by William Chappell. Nor are the new costumes an improvement on the original conception. One misses in particular the grey costume devised for Markova with its head-dress of gigantic red flowers placed at each side of the head, which made one realise that however cumbersome the floral head-dress used by Taglioni may appear in certain prints of the dancer, in actuality they must have been most becoming.

The *divertissement* demands for its complete success an effortless technique, refinement of pose, and skilled and graceful movements of the arms, for the last named are an important part of the choreographic design. Two of the dances are



[Photo: J. W. Debonam]

SCENE FROM "APPARITIONS", EPILOGUE



outstanding; the captivating *Pas de Trois*, so admirably fitted to the lilt of the music, and the beautiful *variation* for the leading *danseuse*. This *variation* was designed for Markova and, although it is frequently danced with grace and charm by her successors to the role, no one so far has succeeded in emulating the timing, speed, precision, and brilliance with which she invested it.

APPARITIONS

Ballet in 5 Scenes, including a Prologue and an Epilogue.

Book: Constant Lambert.

Music: Liszt, orchestrated Gordon Jacob.

Scenery and costumes: Cecil Beaton.

Choreography: Frederick Ashton.

First produced: Sadler's Wells Theatre, London, February 11th, 1936.

CHARACTERS

The Poet Robert Helpmann

The Woman in Ball-dress . Margot Fonteyn

The Hussar Harold Turner

The Monk Maurice Brooke

Ladies of Fashion, Dandies, Belfry Spirits, etc.

Prologue. Scene. A lofty room in a Gothic mansion, one wall pierced with glazed, arched windows. It is night and one corner of the room fitted up as a library is illumined by an oil-lamp placed on a desk.

When the curtain rises a young poet of the Romantic Era is seen writing at the table. He is working at a sonnet, which, strive as he will, he cannot fashion to his satisfaction. Suddenly the windows light up and each frames a strange figure—a hussar, a monk of sinister aspect, and a woman dressed in

ball-dress, who smiles upon the poet. This beautiful vision becomes the symbol of the love the poet is desirous of expressing in his poem. The figures vanish and the poet returns to his composition; but the words dance before his eyes and he finds himself unable to concentrate. In despair he takes a sleeping draught which causes him to slumber uneasily and dream.

Scene I. A ballroom.

First the poet imagines himself in an enormous ballroom, where beautiful women are dancing with handsome men. He, too, wishes to join in the dance, only to be ignored. The dancing stops and the woman of his vision enters and dances alone. Follows an *ensemble* in which the dancers change partners and miraculously the poet finds himself dancing with her, but it is clear that she has eyes only for the handsome hussar. The guests depart and the poet is left alone with his thoughts.

Scene II. A snow-clad plain.

The chiming of bells is heard and in the poet's fevered imagination the bells become animate and take the form of girls, who dance in bell-like skirts and encircle him. They vanish to give place to a funeral procession heralded by a melancholy chant and led by the sinister monk he saw in the window. The poet is curious regarding the still figure borne beneath the purple canopy. He approaches the bier and draws back the coverlet, to reveal the face of the woman of his vision. The monk pushes him aside. The poet, horrified and full of pity, kneels in the snow and offers up a prayer.

Scene III. A cavern.

Here the guests, dressed in red, seem to be delighting in an unholy orgy. The poet takes part in the satanic round, which is suddenly interrupted by the arrival of the woman in ball-dress, who proves to have hideous features. Terrified, he

BALLET BY FREDERICK ASHTON

wishes to leave, but now she pursues him. Exhausted, he swoons. Her features resume their normal loveliness.

Epilogue. Same scene as for the prologue.

The poet awakes from his sleep and realises that his dream is but a reflection of his own life. He goes to the window where he first saw the woman of his vision, but there is nothing. In despair, he stabs himself.

The woman in ball-dress and her companions enter and bear away the poet's corpse.



The theme of *Apparitions*, although inspired by Berlioz's synopsis for his "*Symphonie Fantastique*," has many original touches. The mimed scenes of the prologue and epilogue are well contrived and clearly expressed. The best episode choreographically is that of the ballroom. In the succeeding scene the dance by the belfry spirits is too conventional, but the funeral is a most effective piece of theatre. In the cavern scene the costumes take on a hint of the Beardsley of *Under the Hill* and introduce a note of frivolity which does not accord with the suggestion of a witches' sabbath.

The music is a selection by Constant Lambert of Liszt's later compositions.

NOCTURNE

Ballet in 1 Act.

Book: Edward Sackville West.

Music: Frederick Delius.

Scenery and costumes: Sophie Fedorovich.

First produced: Sadler's Wells Theatre, London, November 10th, 1936.

THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

CHARACTERS

A Spectator	Frederick Ashton
A Young Man	Robert Helpmann
A Rich Girl	June Brae
A Poor Girl	Margot Fonteyn
Masquers, Revellers	

The ballet begins with a short overture which suggests the coming of evening in a big city. The workaday roar of traffic has given place to a low murmur not unlike a sustained organ note, from which rises later a wistful melody which gradually swells in volume, to be occasionally coloured with a hint of revelry.

The curtain rises on a stark setting which suggests the courtyard leading to the ballroom of a palatial residence on the heights of Montmartre. To left and right is an arched doorway with columns; along the length of the background runs a stone balustrade over which looms the deep blue sky of a summer's night. The stage is empty except where an elderly gentleman in evening dress, his back to the audience, is seen looking over the centre of the balustrade.

Then through the left-hand doorway come a succession of dancing couples: gentlemen in immaculate evening dress, and ladies in Edwardian gowns of lace and chiffon, the colours ranging from rich red to deep purple. One man stands out from the rest by reason of a gardenia in his buttonhole, his almost too good looks, and a certain air of dissipation masked by his easy manners. Clearly he is attracted by his chosen partner, a lovely young girl, whose fashionable clothes and fine jewellery proclaim her wealthy station. The couple pause for an instant when two young men claim her for a dance, and, despite her partner's protests, whirl the Girl away in the wake of the other revellers through the doorway to the ballroom beyond.

While the Young Man is left alone, looking after her, a wan Flower Girl in grey, with a basket of violets on her arm, enters the courtyard and shyly proffers her wares. The Young Man

abruptly snatches a posy from the basket, presses it to his lips, and tosses it after the girl he covets. Then he turns to the Flower Girl and, for want of his cherished partner, impulsively takes her hands and dances with her. Carried away by this unexpected attention and the infectious lilt of the music, she falls in love with the handsome young rake, fondly imagining that he is equally in love with her. But her sentimental dream is suddenly interrupted by the entry of a band of masquers in fantastic costumes of black and yellow, who carry off the Flower Girl.

The first Young Girl returns and again dances with the Young Man. The dancing couples return and soon the courtyard is filled with whirling figures, the brightly-coloured skirts of the women set off by the dark suits and white shirt-fronts of the men. Their dance ended the two lovers sink to the ground in a passionate embrace. At this moment the Flower Girl returns and tries to approach the Young Man, but her way is barred by the revellers. The masquers close about the Flower Girl and again carry her off, then return and line the balustrade, a motionless frieze of enigmatic watchers.

Gradually the revellers drift away and once more the Young Man and Young Girl are left together. They dance, then the Young Man is claimed in turn by other ladies with whom he dances in succession. The Young Girl departs and while the Young Man gazes after her, two other ladies pass by with a sidelong glance at him. The Young Man's lips part in a cynical smile. He accepts the challenge and follows in their wake.

The Flower Girl enters shyly, her pale features eloquent of her mental distress. She begins a wistful dance expressive of her longing and frustration. Gradually she becomes more and more overwrought, sinks to her knees, then rises only to fall once more.

The revellers return and the Flower Girl staggers to her feet and seeks among them for the one she loves. Suddenly she catches sight of the Young Man and, filled with happiness at her discovery, goes toward him, only to be roughly repulsed.

THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

Two young men return with the Young Girl. The lovers embrace with passion. The masquers bring forward the Flower Girl and urge the Young Man to choose between the rivals for his affection.

He promptly chooses the Young Girl, whereupon the Flower Girl, heartbroken, swoons to the ground. The masquers kneel in a group before the half-unconscious Flower Girl, regard her enigmatically, give a compassionate nod of their heads, then with a formal bow they take their leave.

Throughout the piece, the Spectator whom, at the rise of the curtain, we saw looking over the balustrade into the night, afterwards make his way to the shadow of a side pillar at which point of vantage he remains—an impassive witness of the human tragedy enacted before his eyes.

Now that masquers and revellers have vanished into the night, he walks slowly towards the prostrate girl, bends down and gently touches her. She rises and wishes to leave, but he succeeds in restraining and comforting her. One of the revellers passes in the background. The Flower Girl, catching sight of the fashionably dressed lady and perhaps being reminded of her rich and fortunate rival, falls to the ground.

The Spectator walks towards the centre of the balustrade where the evening sky is just beginning to change to the flush of dawn. As he slowly sweeps his arms upwards, in greeting to the new-born day, the curtain falls.



Nocturne is danced to Delius's *Paris*, which the composer described as a *Nachtstück* or *Nocturne* and no doubt thus suggested the title for the ballet. The American playwright, Robert E. Sherwood, was once asked the following question by an enterprising woman journalist: "Which do you think women prefer, Mr. Sherwood—reliable but dull gentlemen or fascinating cads?" *Nocturne* provides the answer—in choreographic terms.

The settings and costumes by Sophie Fedorovich are well contrasted, the low-toned background being an admirable

BALLET BY FREDERICK ASHTON

foil for the richly-coloured diaphanous costumes. The dresses suggest the nineteen-hundreds and evoke a nostalgia for those far-off days when gaiety was unrestricted and rationing unknown. There is perhaps also a faint memory of those dramas of high life once so popular a feature at Drury Lane in the days of Sir Arthur Collins.

There is a fine ebb and flow of dancers to and from the ball-room beyond our view, the timed gaps in the human chain affording opportunity for the introduction of little episodes of amorous intrigue, true love, and bitter disillusion. And over all looms the silent form of the Spectator, reminiscent of the Stranger in Jerome K. Jerome's *Passing of the Third Floor Back*.

The conception of the Flower Girl, whose features reflect something of the youthful tragedy of the young woman in Manet's *Bar aux Folies-Bergère*, affords almost too strong a contrast to the young man's well-dressed and worldly-wise women friends. Again, the academic steps and poses allotted to the Flower Girl seem too formal, too artificial for so simple and so trusting a young woman of the people. But *Nocturne* is primarily an expression of mood, in which endeavour Ashton is completely successful.

LES PATINEURS

Ballet in 1 Act.

Music: Meyerbeer, arranged Constant Lambert.

Scenery and costumes: William Chappell.

Choreography: Frederick Ashton.

First produced: Sadler's Wells Theatre, London, February 16th,

1937.

CHARACTERS

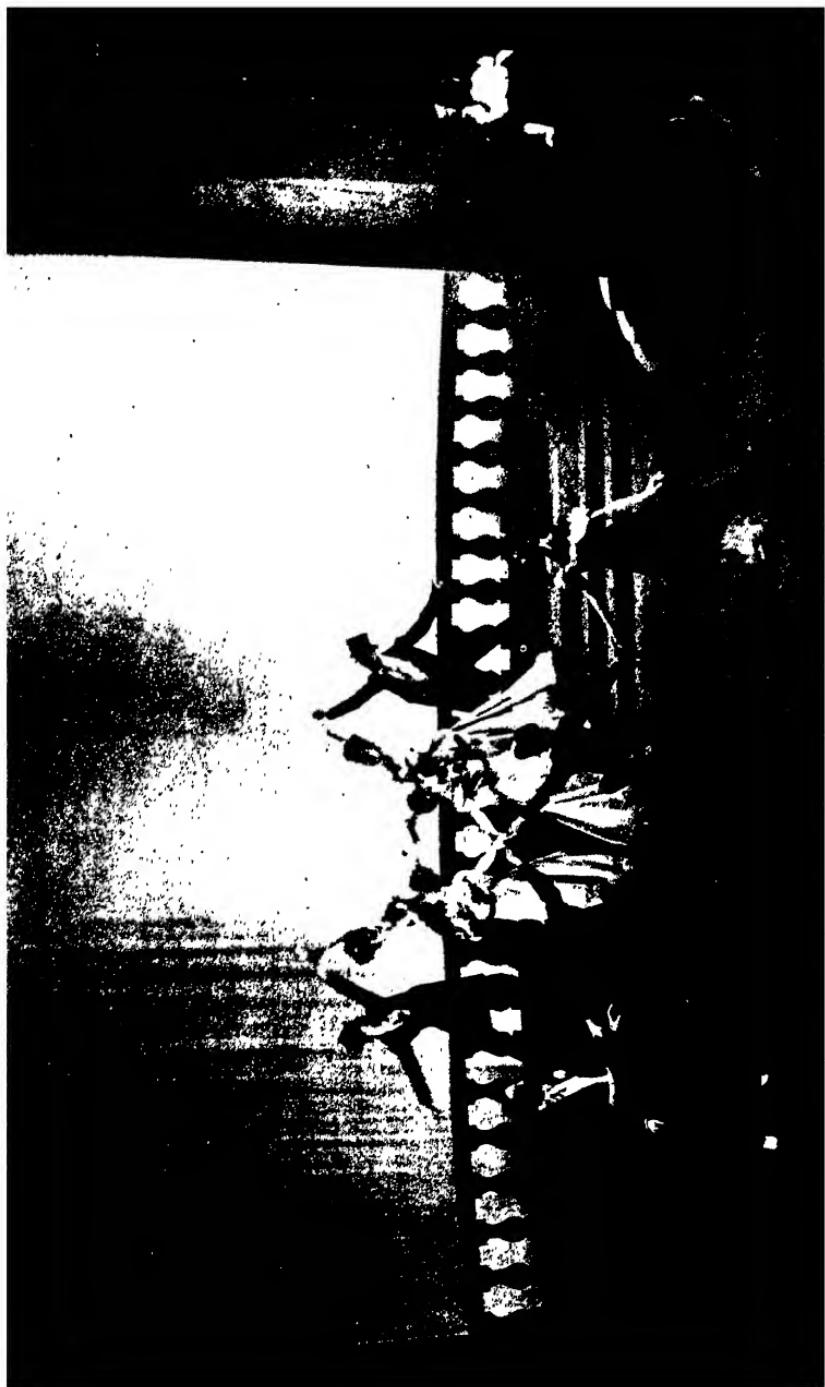
Entrée	{ Mary Honer Elizabeth Miller
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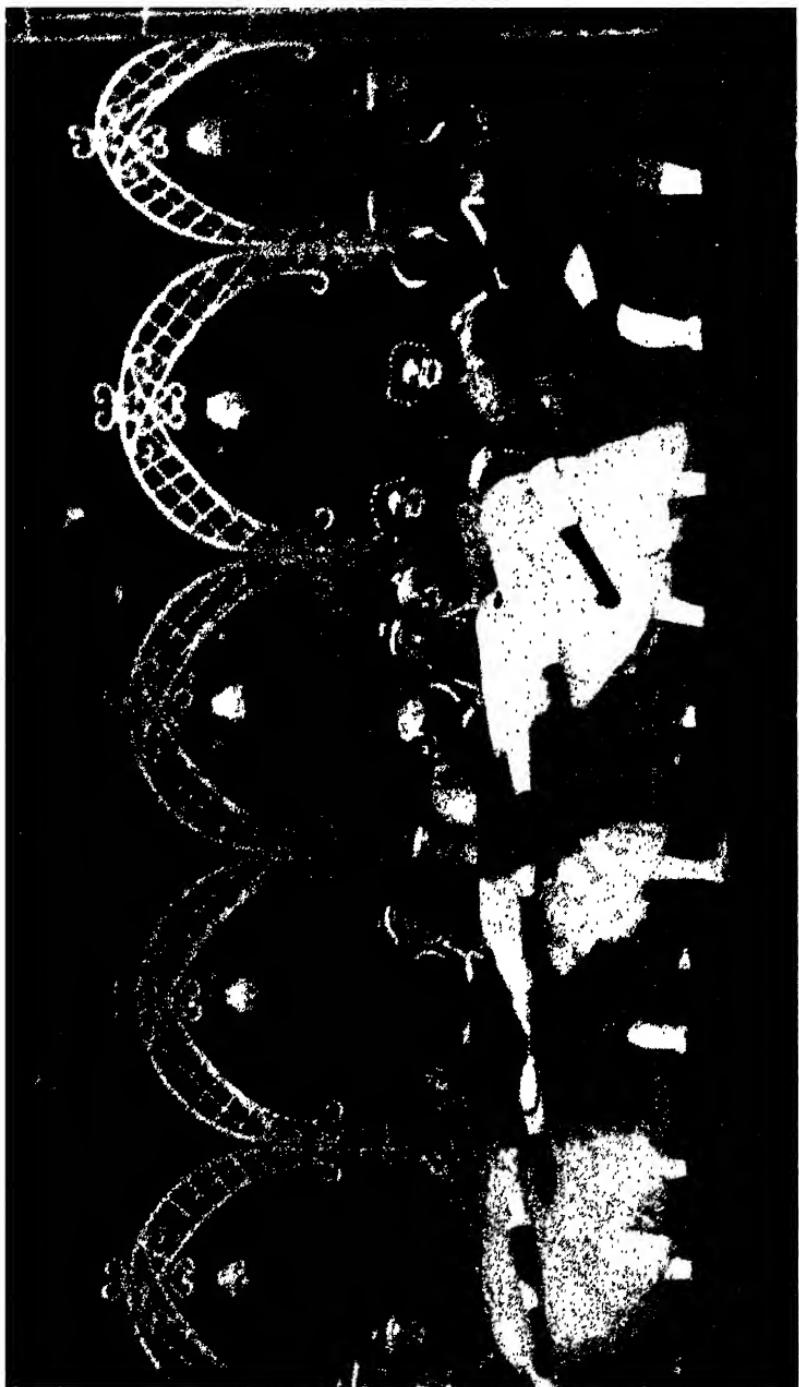
THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

		Gwyneth Mathews, Joy Newton, Peggy Melliss, Wenda Hors- burgh, Richard Ellis, Leslie Edwards, Michael Somes, Paul Reyloff
Pas de Huit	.	Harold Turner
Variation	.	Margot Fonteyn
Pas de Deux	.	Robert Helpmann
Ensemble	.	Margot Fonteyn, Mary Honer, Elizabeth Miller, Pamela May, June Brae, Harold Turner, Robert Helpmann, and <i>Pas de Huit</i>
Pas de Trois	.	Mary Honer Elizabeth Miller Harold Turner
Pas des Patineuses	.	June Brae Pamela May
Ensemble	.	Mary Honer, Elizabeth Miller, Pamela May, June Brae, Harold Turner, Richard Ellis, Leslie Edwards, Michael Somes, Paul Reyloff

Scene. The severity of winter and the freezing over of a stretch of water afford opportunity for a skating festival. On the far bank of the pool has been erected a colonnade of light arches of trellis; at the top of each arch hangs a glowing Chinese lantern. Beyond the colonnade stretches a snow-covered plain relieved by gaunt trees, their dark branches here and there brushed with snow.

As the curtain rises we see four skating couples in brown and blue glide in a complete circle anti-clockwise round the pool, leaving one couple at each of the four corners, who execute on place a series of spins *en arabesque*. Then the couples continue to glide from corner to corner, the men





SCENE FROM "LES PATINEURS"

[Photo: J. W. Debenham]

going one way, the girls another. After a further series of spins, the couples reform and glide twice round the frozen pool, changing places with partners, and exit.

Next come two smartly dressed girls in dark blue and white, who cross the pool with jaunty stride and confident swing of the hips, as if supremely conscious of their ability to triumph over any possible rival on the ice.

As they pass from sight they are followed by a solitary young man in round furred cap and tight-fitting trousers and tunic of blue, trimmed with fur. He is clearly a master skater, for he spins and leaps and bounces up and down on the ice with an ease, a speed, and a brilliance which are exhilarating in the extreme.

Follows a romantic *pas de deux* by a skating couple in white.

The four couples return and are presently joined by two new girls in maroon and white who, after describing a few figures, take their exit. The four couples circle round and vanish from sight. The two girls in blue return, skate awhile, and exit. The *pas de huit* return, followed by the couple in white, and indulge in a number of spins and turns in various poses, followed by bounds over the ice. The boy in blue enters to astonish us for a few moments with more feats of dexterity, to be followed by the two girls in maroon, then the pair in blue. Swinging into single file they zig-zag away through the centre arch into the darkness, leaving behind the young man in blue.

Very soon he is joined by the two girls in blue which affords opportunity for a skaters' *pas de trois*. With the young man as centre, the trio glide forward, now in single file, now with linked arms in line abreast. They exit to be succeeded by the two girls in maroon, who have not yet attained the confident skill which comes from long practice, so that their skates have an annoying tendency to slip upright, thus becoming a cause of embarrassment rather than an aid to joy. Four young men arrive and pull the maroon girls over the pool while the latter pose *en arabesque*, then they help them to turn, after which all exit.

THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

Enter one of the girls in blue who launches into a series of brilliant spins on place, after which her friend circles round the stage in a series of small travelling spins. The whole company return and the frolic works up to an exciting finale when, as the light slowly fades and flakes of snow begin to fall, the four couples leap in succession off the stage on either side, while the other skaters glide away with a series of small travelling spins, leaving the boy in blue in the centre of the frozen pool.

The solitary exhibition skater proceeds to indulge in the ecstasy of a series of spins with one leg extended at hip height. More flakes fall, but the figure continues to turn quietly and effectively, as if to prove the existence of perpetual motion. He spins and spins, while the music soars and accelerates as if inspired by his example. On the final beat the curtain drops abruptly, but we still feel the skater to be turning on and on, although he is now cut off from our view.



When one has just witnessed this ballet it is difficult to credit Ashton's statement that at the time he composed *Les Patineurs* he had never seen an ice-rink. The explanation of this problem is simple. Ashton has elected to use his imagination rather than imitate reality.

I do not know the origin of this ballet, possibly it was inspired by Brandard's well-known lithograph of Carolina Rosati and M. Charles in Paul Taglioni's ballet, *Les Plaisirs de l'Hiver, ou les Patineurs* or perhaps by the theme of the ballet itself. Originally, the Wells' *Patineurs* was to be produced by Ninette de Valois. At that theatre, Ashton's dressing-room adjoined the conductor's room, from which came snatches of lively airs with well-marked rhythms as Lambert devised a mosaic from Meyerbeer's operas, to be precise, four numbers from *Le Prophète* and four from *L'Etoile du Nord*.

Ashton felt his choreographic inspiration responding eagerly to the melodies he heard, and he was naturally a little depressed knowing that the work was to be arranged by Miss de Valois. It happened, however, that when the score was

BALLET BY FREDERICK ASHTON

ready, she was still preoccupied with various administrative matters, and so *Les Patineurs* was transferred to Ashton. It is easy to imagine how delighted he must have been.

Les Patineurs is one of the most charming and spontaneous of Ashton's compositions. It is a series of *divertissements*, so cunningly linked together by the small *corps de ballet* that there is no sense of isolated numbers. They all flow easily and imperceptibly one into the other, thus preserving the form of a homogeneous work.

Although the choreography is purely academic, it is given style and character by the superimposition of all kinds of gay and witty conceits, based on what might happen at a skating-rink. The anxiety and awkwardness of the tyro, the joyous glide of the habitués, the languorous sweep of the lovers, the technical "fireworks" of the virtuoso—all are adroitly contrasted and exploited to the full. Last, but not least, the suggestion of ice-skating is maintained throughout.

The setting designed by Chappell has the triple merit of being simple in conception, pleasing to look upon, and extremely effective as a background for the gyrations of the dancers. The costumes are admirable, with the one qualification that the silk tunic of the young man in blue seems a trifle thin for winter wear.

HOROSCOPE

Ballet in 1 Act.

Book: Constant Lambert.

Music: Constant Lambert.

Scenery and costumes: Sophie Fedorovich.

Choreography: Frederick Ashton.

First produced: Sadler's Wells Theatre, London, January 27th, 1938.

CHARACTERS

The Young Man (Sun in Leo, Moon in Gemini). Michael Somes

THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

The Young Woman (Sun in	
Virgo, Moon in Gemini)	Margot Fonteyn
The Gemini	{ Richard Ellis
	Alan Carter
The Moon	Pamela May
Followers of Leo, Followers of Virgo, Attendants on	
the Moon.	

Horoscope, as its title suggests, is a ballet ordered by the signs of the zodiac and revolves about two young people—a young man whose life is ruled by the sun in Leo and the moon in Gemini; and a young woman, whose future is governed by the moon in Gemini, but whose sun is in Virgo. The contrasting forces of Leo and Virgo, the one strong and energetic, the other timid and sensitive, struggle to keep the man and woman apart. But the Gemini bring them together, and through the influence of the Moon they are finally united.

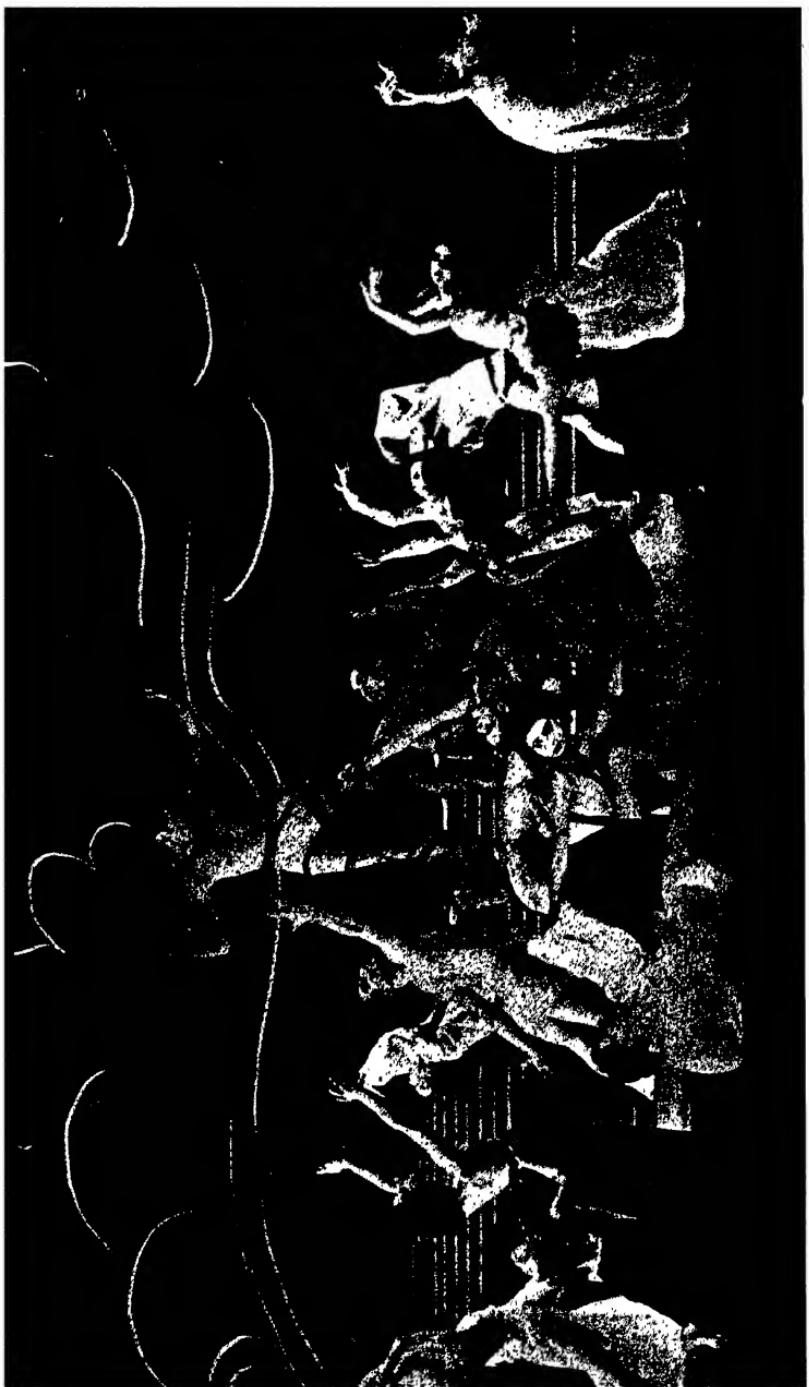


This simple story provides the framework for an essay in the manner of the modern symphonic ballet, the *variations* of the soloists being contrasted with chorric movements and poses. While *Horoscope* shows traces of the influence of Massine, it has many individual touches. The movements and dances of the opposing groups are well varied and co-ordinated, and achieve a genuine lyric quality, while some of the poses are charming. *Horoscope* is certainly one of Ashton's most poetic compositions.

The music is distinguished, vari-coloured, and full of bold and strongly-marked rhythms.

The settings, with their deep-toned backgrounds relieved with a few stray banks of clouds, make a good background for Fedorovich's costumes. The most attractive of these is the tunic of wide-meshed cord net worn by the Young Man (which may have been inspired by that worn by Lifar in his ballet *Jeunesse*, produced 1933), but the costumes designed





SCENE FROM "DANTE SONATA"

[Photo: J. W. Debenham]

for the Followers of Leo are unsuited to inhabitants of the spheres.

The characters of the Young Woman and the Young Man, although not too clearly defined in the choreography, are well sustained by Margot Fonteyn, who dances with charm, and Michael Somes, who successfully made his *début* as a soloist in this ballet.

DANTE SONATA

Ballet in 1 Act.

Music: Liszt, orchestrated by Constant Lambert.

Scenery and costumes: Sophie Fedorovich after Flaxman.

Choreography: Frederick Ashton.

First produced: Sadler's Wells Theatre, London, January 23rd, 1940.

ARTISTES

Margot Fonteyn, Pamela May, Julia Farron, Anne Spicer, Olive Deacon, Joan Phillips, Joan Leaman, Margaret Dale, Michael Somes, Richard Ellis, Leslie Edwards, Leo Young.

June Brae, Joy Newton, Patricia Garnett, Palma Nye, Guinevere Parry, Mavis Jackson, Annabel Farjeon, Joan Ross, Robert Helpmann, Alan Carter, John Hart, Stanley Hall.

Dante Sonata is danced to Liszt's *D'après une lecture de Dante —Fantaisie, quasi Sonate*—a pianoforte solo composed by him in 1837 while residing at the Villa Melzi, Bellagio, near Lake Como. Liszt had always maintained a deep admiration for the *Divina Commedia* which he long wished to express in music. But on this occasion he made use of Victor Hugo's poem, *D'après une lecture de Dante*, which afforded him a useful synopsis as a working basis. The music is full of stirring movement, a restless surging and whirling, and over all looms an atmosphere of evil. These qualities are further stressed by Lambert's orchestration.

The costumes by Fedorovich are inspired by the representations of the male and female spirits in the illustrations which

THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

John Flaxman (1755-1826) designed for Dante's *Divina Commedia*, rendered with that economy of line characteristic of sculptors' drawings. There are two groups of spirits: the Children of Light, in white, the women in simple flowing dresses, the men nude except for white tights and short tunics; and the Children of Darkness, in black, the women in skirts cut to bare one leg, the men in white trunks. The Children of Darkness have the upper part of their bodies and their legs entwined with snakes.

The setting consists of a dark back-cloth, the lower part scored with a succession of short white parallel lines, which suggest a flight of steps; the upper portion is decorated with a few curved lines arranged to convey a gust of smoke. The simplicity of the whole is reminiscent of those purely calligraphic designs beloved of Chinese artists.

Inspired¹ by the compelling music and the romantic theme of tortured spirits, Ashton has devised a most effective panorama of writhing and contorted beings, now fluid, now coalescing into a striking group which as quickly dissolves to form a new one. He certainly manœuvres his dancers in a way which suggests being tossed and whirled by a mighty wind, and the illusion is further heightened by skilful and dramatic lighting from the front and sides which adds shadowy forms, now diminishing, now increasing, to the vortex of whirling figures.



In this production Ashton has made use of a non-classical technique, an adaptation of the principles of the Central European School. The Children of Darkness, with their snakes, snarling features,² bared teeth and similar horrific

¹ It has been stated that *Dante Sonata* was inspired by the sufferings of Poland in the Second World War. This is not so. Just previous to the composition of this ballet, Ashton suffered the loss of a close relative, an event which moved him deeply. Thus this work is influenced by a savage revolt against the immobility of death.

² These facial contortions become irritating as time goes on, and here is an undoubted occasion where well designed masks could be used with excellent effect.

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attributes, resemble Furies, and appear to seek relief from their own tortures by brutally attacking the Children of Light, repentant sinners hoping for deliverance. Yet when the turmoil has died down, it is seen that all their struggles are unavailing, and that there can be no salvation for these tortured souls forever doomed.

Some of the resulting plastic groups have a dignity of composition reminiscent of a drawing by William Blake, others have too pronounced a suggestion of construction, and there are a few instances in which the group is weakened by symmetrical planning. But, as a whole, the ballet is an impressive and moving composition, whose forcefulness never flags.

There are two matters which invite criticism. First, a tendency to invest certain of the episodes with an element of eroticism quite inapposite to the theme. Second, the perpetration of an anachronism, not to say a breach of taste, in causing a dancer to lie on the stage with arms outstretched as though crucified, while another dancer mimes the action of nails being driven through his palms; and the introduction of two upright crucified figures in the group with which the ballet ends.

THE WISE VIRGINS

Ballet in 1 Act.

Music: J. S. Bach, orchestrated by William Walton.

Scenery and costumes: Rex Whistler.

Choreography: Frederick Ashton.

First produced: Sadler's Wells Theatre, London, April 24th, 1940.

CHARACTERS

The Bridegroom	.	.	Michael Somes
The Bride	.	.	Margot Fonteyn
The Father	.	.	Claude Newman

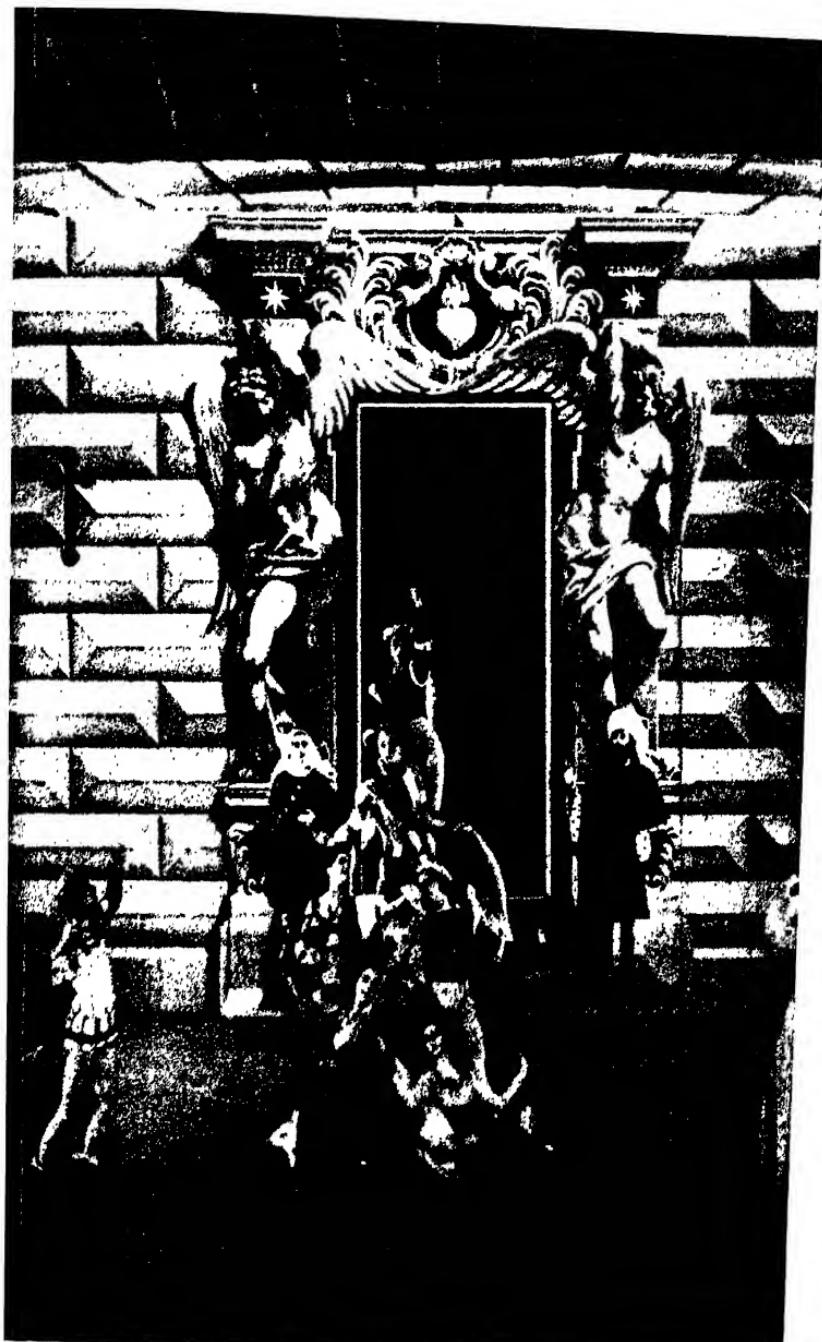
THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

Her Mother	Annabel Farjeon
Wise Virgins	Julia Farron, Olive Deacon, Joan Leaman, Joan Phillips, Palma Nye
Foolish Virgins	Mary Honer, Elizabeth Kennedy, Joy Newton, Patricia Garnett, Jean Bedells
Angels	Richard Ellis, John Hart, Leslie Edwards, Leo Young, Stanley Hall,
Cherubs	Deryk Mendel, Margaret Dale, Guinevere Parry, Mavis Jackson

The stage curtain rises to disclose a charmingly painted drop-curtain. The base represents a tessellated floor, bounded on either side by a pink wall, each broken by a central door; that on the left is shut, that on the right is open. Midway across the floor is set an antique lamp from which rises a succession of small clouds of smoke. These clouds provide a frame for a large scroll, supported by angels, which is inscribed with the parable of the Wise and the Foolish Virgins.

The light slowly fades and the drop-curtain rises on the scene proper. All is dark save in the centre where a group of cherubs costumed in black and pink dance softly. The scene grows lighter and now it is possible to examine it in detail. The foreground is bounded on each side by a stone pillar decorated with a sculptured group of cherubs. The background consists of a pink wall built of massive fluted bricks, in the centre of which is a flight of steps leading to a rectangular gold door, studded with nails. This door is flanked on either side by a tall pedestal bearing a gigantic sculptured angel, whose inner wings combine to form the architrave. On either side of the wall is a square stone bowl planted with climbing roses.

Now the cherubs cease their dancing and take up graceful attitudes on the steps. Enter the Wise Virgins in sombre



SCENE FROM "THE WISE VIRGINS"

[Photo: Gordon]

[Photo: Gordon Anthony]

SCENE FROM "THE WANDERER"



robes of two shades of grey; they bear lighted lamps. After them come the Bride and her parents. The Bride wears a red and white banded head-dress and a long white robe, half concealed by a wide grey scarf draped about her shoulders. Her parents are in Eastern costumes. The father wears a white turban, a dark red cloak with the sleeves tipped with ermine, and red stockings. The mother is clad in a crimson and black dress, while her hair is bound with a white kerchief.

The trio are followed by the Foolish Virgins who wear transparent flowing robes and a tunic reaching to the knees; these costumes are all in gay pastel shades, the sleeves bound with bright gold. The conflicting characters of the two groups of virgins are expressed not only in their attire but also in their dancing, the Wise Virgins moving with severe angular gestures, while those of the Foolish Virgins are soft, rounded, and indolent.

The Bride's veil is drawn away by her parents and she is seen to be all in white, relieved by a narrow silver girdle about her waist. She dances a simple quiet measure which radiates the chastity of her spirit. At the end of her dance her parents and the Wise Virgins group themselves about her.

The light fades and the Bride and her parents pass from view. Presently they return, the Bride having removed her head-dress. The scene grows darker, symbolising the approach of night and the hour for repose. The Wise Virgins knees devoutly and pray, then, after carefully extinguishing their lamps, they compose themselves to rest. The Foolish Virgin, set down their still lighted lamps, recline on the ground land without a care for the morrow, lazily fall asleep.

The Bride's parents kneel so that their sloping thighs form a pillow for her head, while their arms curve about her shoulders in loving protection. As the Bride sleeps she has a vision of heavenly angels who gather about her. They raise her up and set her on her feet. At the same moment two other angels bring in the Bridegroom, a richly dressed youth of noble bearing, wearing a shining crown rayed like the sun. For an instant the couple meet, then the youth is

borne away. The Bride sinks back into the arms of the attendant angels who bear her to her resting-place, rock her gently to and fro, then lower her sleeping form into the arms of her parents. The angels depart. The vision ends.

There is a sudden burst of lively music and one of the cherubs leaps from the steps to the ground and dances gaily. He announces the coming of the Bridegroom and hastens to rouse first the Wise Virgins, then the Foolish Virgins, whose leader still slumbers on. The Wise Virgins trim and light their lamps. The Foolish Virgins are shocked to find that their lamps will burn no longer for want of oil. In desperation, they try to obtain oil from the Wise Virgins but, being refused, they set out to buy some. Before leaving, they try to awaken their leader, but failing in this, they depart without her. Hardly have they gone when their leader awakes. Greatly concerned at finding herself alone, she runs about in distraction, to be still more concerned on discovering that her lamp will not light. She, too, begs for oil, but is urged to seek elsewhere, so she hurries away.

The Bride opens her eyes and her parents assist her to her feet. Two Wise Virgins stand on either side of her, a fifth kneels before the steps and lifts up her lamp in homage.

A cherub opens wide the door and through the opening appears a group of angels, last of all comes the heavenly Bridegroom. The procession descends the steps. The Bridegroom goes toward the Bride and her parents, who kneel before him. The Bridegroom raises the Bride and takes her tenderly in his arms; at the same moment the angels lift the Wise Virgins in the air, so that a beautiful group is formed in which the cherubs take their place. The group dissolves and the Bride and Bridegroom stand united. The cherubs return with the cloak of chastity which they put on the Bride, while a lily is placed in her hand. The Bridegroom is handed a golden sceptre.

Now the angels and Wise Virgins walk in pairs, through the open door, last of all come the Bride and Bridegroom attended by two cherubs. The door shuts fast.

The Bride's parents, suddenly conscious of their loneliness, walk sorrowfully toward the door. The mother beats softly against the door, then bursts into tears. Her husband gently leads her away while trying to console her.

Lively music heralds the return of the Foolish Virgins who, having replenished their lamps with oil, return in triumph. Amazed to find their companions vanished, they beat loudly on the closed door. Suddenly it swings back and they are about to hurry through the opening, when their way is barred by cherubs who force them back down the steps. Behind the cherubs come the five angels each escorting one of the Wise Virgins. There is a flourish of trumpets and the Bride and Bridegroom appear in the doorway. As the Bridegroom bestows on his consort a glittering crown, the Foolish Virgins kneel in homage.



Some years ago, Ashton and Constant Lambert happened to be in Cambridge, where they spent the evening with a mutual friend, the University organist, Bernhard Ord. At one point the conversation turned on the music of Bach, which led Lambert to join their host at the piano, and resulted in an impromptu recital of typical examples of that composer's work. Among the pieces played was the lovely melody, *Sheep may safely graze*, which so moved Ashton that he expressed the view that he would very much like to arrange a ballet to such music.

Later, this thought took definite shape. Ashton is a constant reader of the Bible and, perusing again the Gospel of St. Matthew, it occurred to him that the parable of the wise and the foolish virgins would provide an excellent theme for a ballet to music by Bach. The reader will doubtless have observed that the theme is not left in its original form, but embroidered upon to become a morality play. The symbolic Bride of the parable becomes a young woman escorted by her parents on her way to meet the Bridegroom, and the piece concludes with the Wise Virgins being each united to an angel, while the Foolish Virgins are punished for their

indolence and sins of omission by being shut out from the joys of Heaven.

The Bach pieces have been well chosen by Lambert to fit the varying moods of the action and no less admirably orchestrated by Dr. Walton.

The setting by Rex Whistler is the best of his many fine designs for the theatre. The general style of treatment is clearly based on Italian Painting of the Renaissance. The Bride's costume is beautiful in its simplicity and graceful lines. The costumes of the Bride's parents suggest the influence of Paolo Veronese; the cherubs have the airy grace of a painting by Botticelli. The costumes of both Wise and Foolish Virgins are less pleasing.

The ballet has been built about a single figure, that of the Bride, who, despite the quiet mood of serenity and resignation which distinguishes the character, yet contrives to dominate the whole. The actions which Ashton has devised for the Bride and her parents are among the most beautiful and satisfying phrases of movement in all his ballets.

The Bride's quiet and restrained movements have the flower-like grace associated with oriental dancing, while the soft and flowing *ports de bras*, ornamented with little flourishes of the wrists, invest the whole conception with a truly lyric quality. The Bride's saintliness is further stressed by restricting her actions mainly to the head, arms, and body. For the parents, Ashton has planned movements of a simple dignity and tenderness which depict their deep love for their daughter, a love tinged with grief which, although concealed from her, is none the less deeply felt, at the thought of the imminent parting with their chief treasure. The effect of this three-part song in movement is most touching.

The cherubs, too, have many pleasing poses, while some of the groups to which they largely contribute have the intricate massing typical of baroque sculpture.

The movements of the Wise and Foolish Virgins are less unusual. The actions of the former have an angularity and hardness which suggest that virtue is an unsympathetic quality;

in this connection it is of interest to study Blake's drawing of the Wise Virgins, where virtue has a serenity and grace all its own. The dances of the Foolish Virgins lack the originality which one has the right to expect from a choreographer of Ashton's invention. The dances of the Angels also leave something to be desired, since there is a certain incongruity about the introduction of such purely academic poses as the *arabesque* amid the half-oriental, half-baroque style of the principal characters. Still, these are small flaws in a work which contains many moments of rare beauty and poetry made visible.

THE WANDERER

Choreography Fantasy in 4 Scenes.

Book: Frederick Ashton.

Music: Schubert¹.

Scenery and costumes: Graham Sutherland.

First produced: New Theatre, London, January 27th, 1941.

CHARACTERS

(a) Allegro con fuoco	.	.	.	Robert Helpmann, Alan Carter, John Hart, Leslie Edwards, John Field, Margot Fonteyn, Mary Honer, Patricia Garnett, Julia Farron, Pamela May, Michael Somes
				Robert Helpmann, Joy Newton, Palma Nye, Wenda Horsburgh, Guinevere Parry, Joan Phillips, Elizabeth Kennedy, Alan Carter, John Hart, Leslie Edwards, John Field, Julia Farron, Margaret Dale, Deryk Mendel
(b) Adagio	.	.	.	.

¹His *Wanderer—Fantasie* for piano. Later, Liszt's version for piano and orchestra was used.

THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

		Robert Helpmann, Mary Honer, Patricia Garnett, Margot Fonteyn, Alan Carter, John Hart, Leslie Edwards, John Field, Pamela May, Michael Somes
(c) Presto		
(d) Finale-Allegro		Robert Helpmann and entire cast

This ballet, which has no clear-cut story, is an attempt to express in terms of dancing, some fragmentary recollections in the mind of a typical man as he journeys mentally through some experiences encountered in years gone by. The *Wanderer* thus resembles some pages of Proust's *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* presented through a different medium.

Scene I.

When the curtain rises we see a solitary figure, the Wanderer himself, clad in a nondescript walking dress of light brown shirt and grey, skin-tight breeches reaching to the calf. His hands are held parallel and close to his eyes; then agitated before them, as though to suggest the varied thoughts that keep flashing through his brain. Enter four robust and boisterous young men who leap and bound around and about, separately, or with linked arms, for sheer joy of their physical strength. They express the carefree days of youth.

Enter a newcomer, a woman in close-fitting tunic and tights, carried out in crimson and black, her arms covered with long white gloves studded with gleaming sequins, while her hair is adorned with a tall floating plume, coloured black and green. This fantastic figure, passed from one youth to another in a bewildering succession of acrobatic movements, represents the glamour of worldly success, so often elusive and yet ever inspiring mankind to new and greater efforts.

Next come two flighty girls, who present another aspect of carefree youth.

They are followed by Compassion, personified by a young girl, her long dark hair unbound, who wears a robe of deep

purple. She brings the anodyne of sympathy and consolation to those who have been denied success.

Last of all come a young man and girl dressed in palest pink, two lovers all absorbed in each other, who see the future through a rose-tinted mist. Their sensitive and graceful movements are eloquent of their innocent delight in each other's company. The Wanderer relives those precious memories of his first love.

Scene II.

The scene changes and now the Wanderer is beset by every kind of mental stress—illness, fears and doubts, disillusion. . . . At last the sombre figure of Compassion glides to his side to comfort and succour him in his distress and pain.

Scene III.

Gradually the stage lightens to be filled once more with the characters of the opening scene.

Scene IV.

The Wanderer begins a new theme, which is gradually echoed by all the symbolic characters figuring in his thoughts. As the varying groups dissolve and reform, he assumes a more and more dominant role, finally to be lifted high in the air, in aloof and detached isolation, significant perhaps of his decision to renounce all earthly ambitions with their accompanying cares and trials, to find peace and contentment in a mind at rest.



Ballet, with its immense and varied range of expression, is one of the most elastic of artistic mediums. An examination of the repertory of the Sadler's Wells Ballet alone would afford ample confirmation of this statement. But ballet is not adapted to incursions into the realm of metaphysics, for the simple reason that a certain movement which the choreographer intends shall suggest a particular sentiment or emotion may, unless it is of the most obvious type, evoke a quite

THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

different association in the mind of the spectator. I venture, therefore, to suggest that the spectator should set aside all Freudian longings to probe the meaning of this or that phrase of movement and view the ballet purely as an abstract dance composition. It has many claims to attention.

The title-role is the keystone of the choreographic design and Ashton shows a fertile imagination in the creation of contrasting moods, and an unusual sense of design in the invention of his groups and dance patterns. Observe how, like drops of mercury, the dancers are made to flow together, divide, and again combine with an ease which only comes from the most careful planning and timing. Some of the groups, although quite original in conception, show the influence of Nijinska's *Noctes*.

The figure of Success is allotted a most difficult series of movements, which are not only acrobatic but look dangerous in the extreme. Personally, I dislike the growing tendency towards acrobatics and the increasing introduction of "lifts" in ballet, but there is no denying that the Success sequence is a brilliant composition. The most beautiful of Ashton's conceptions is the *pas de deux* of the two lovers, which has a lyrical quality of unusual purity.

I do not care for either the costumes or the settings. The men's costumes are too often reminiscent of a contemporary youth club, and, in the case of the Wanderer, seem strangely practical for a journey into the subconscious.

THE QUEST

Ballet in 5 Scenes.

Book: Doris Langley Moore after Spenser's "Faerie Queene."

Music: William Walton.

Scenery and costumes: John Piper.

Choreography: Frederick Ashton.

First produced: New Theatre, London, April 6th, 1943.

BALLETS BY FREDERICK ASHTON

CHARACTERS

Archimago (a Magician personifying Hypocrisy)	.	Leslie Edwards
Female Servant (transformed into Una)	.	Celia Franca
Male Servant . . . . .	.	Anthony Burke
Bats (Evil Spirits) . . . . .	.	{ Pauline Clayden Lorna Mossford
St. George (the Red Cross Knight, personifying Holiness) . . . . .	.	Robert Helpmann
Una (personifying Truth)	.	Margot Fonteyn
Sansfoy (Faithless) . . . . .	.	Franklin White
Sansjoy (Joyless) . . . . .	.	David Paltenghi
Duessa (personifying Falsehood)	.	Beryl Grey
Sansloy (Lawless) . . . . .	.	Alexis Rassine
Sloth . . . . .	.	Nigel Desmond
Gluttony . . . . .	.	Ray Powell
Wrath . . . . .	.	Celia Franca
Lechery . . . . .	.	Anthony Burke
Avarice . . . . .	.	Gordon Hamilton
Envy . . . . .	.	Palma Nye
Pride (as Queen) . . . . .	.	Moira Shearer
Faith . . . . .	.	Julia Farron
Charity . . . . .	.	Jean Bedells
Hope . . . . .	.	Moyra Fraser
Courtiers, Attendant Virtues.		

A brief overture establishes a mood of enchantment, mystery, and threatening danger. This is intensified by the sullen murmur of an approaching storm, punctuated by loud thunder-claps and the pounding hiss of heavy rain.

The curtain rises to disclose a dim forest glade, the central portion shot with a lambent glow. Fitful flashes of lightning afford glimpses of the gnarled trunks of trees, their snaky branches thickly intertwined. Against this sombre back-

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ground can be seen an old man, with hoary locks blowing in the wind, severely dressed in an ample gown of sober black, his head covered with a mitre-shaped headdress. But his modest exterior masks the person of the evil magician, Archimago, the personification of hypocrisy. He is attended by two bat-like creatures, clothed in greenish-black, who hover and flutter attentively about him. Archimago calls from the shadows two evil spirits whom he commands to assume the respective likenesses of a man and a woman.

Enter the gentle knight, St. George, clad in white doublet and hose, his surcoat bearing the symbol of holiness, a blood-red cross, and on his head a gleaming helmet of steel. His waist is girded with a belt and sword. At his side walks a lady in white flowing gown, her features lightly veiled. Archimago, assuming a sage-like air, offers the pair the shelter of his hermitage close by. The wayfarers gladly accept the opportunity to take refuge from the storm, and Archimago, by way of simple refreshment, proffers a cup of wine, from which each drinks in turn. They are both bemused by the potion and Archimago dances with the lady called Una, but she frees herself and goes to St. George. The two bats separate the lovers, and while one conducts Una to shelter, the other lays the knight down in troubled slumber.

Archimago now proceeds with his fiendish plan. He bids his bats return with the female spirit whom he causes to assume the guise of Una. The evil spirit watches and invites St. George to dance with her, but he recoils from her caresses and leaves the scene in horror. Then the magician causes the false Una to recline beside the male spirit. They kiss and fondle each other so that Una, whom St. George thought so fair a maiden, is revealed a vile wanton. St. George, finding them thus, draws his sword to slay the pair, but his arm is stayed by Archimago, whereupon the knight flees in horror. The real Una enters and, completely bewildered to see her double in the arms of a man, takes to flight.

Archimago returns and, delighted at having separated the knight from Una, caresses his bats and thanks the spirits for

their help in his plot. And now he plans a new device: to assume by means of his powers of enchantment, the likeness of the Red Cross Knight himself. His monkish robe vanishes and suddenly he is dressed in doublet and hose of white, with a cross upon his breast. The spirits proffer first a helmet, then a sword. The spirits disappear and the false knight and his bats set out in the opposite direction. The curtain falls.

The second scene shows a rocky pass near the Palace of Pride. When the curtain rises, two Saracen knights, each armed with a sword and crescent-shaped shield bearing his name in gothic script, are seen standing near the naturally-arched entrances. On the left is Sansloy or Lawless, in purple, with metal-studded hauberk; on the right is Joyless, in bright red. The two knights dance and practise their weapons.

Enter the lovely Duessa, a garish figure in strident magenta and yellow, escorted by a third Saracen knight, Sansfoy, or Faithless, in yellow, and armed with sword and shield. Lawless and Joyless depart, and Duessa and her knight indulge in a passionate dance. St. George appears, whereupon Faithless draws his sword. They fight and after a fierce struggle, the Saracen is slain. Duessa, seeing her champion fall, goes towards his body, but St. George draws her away. Then Duessa, who personifies Falsehood, assumes a confiding air and tells the knight how she met Faithless who forced her to accompany him. He even sought to win her love, but in vain. Her story told she beseeches St. George's protection, which he readily grants and they proceed on their way together. Bemused by her dissembling tale, he pities her plight, then, charmed by her sorcery, his pity turns to thoughts of love.

Una enters and, having sought in vain for St. George, falls asleep. The bats hover about her and Archimago arrives, disguised as St. George; he wears his visor down so that his face cannot be seen. He raises Una from the ground and she, mistaking him for her true knight, dances with him, while the bats flutter in the background. Then all exit.

The third scene presents the Palace of Pride.

When the curtain rises the court is seen to be crowded

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watching the formal dances by six creatures in fantastic costumes of green and white, so contrived that from one side they appear to be men, and on the other women. About the throne of Pride, their queen, are grouped the seven deadly sins, their heads decked with plumes, who also dance, each in turn.

First Sloth, a man in black with purple cloak and feathered hat. With heavy head and stumbling gait, he drags himself along, half snoring, half wheezing, to find a place where he can set a bolster on the ground, and, sprawling his limbs, drown his wits in sleep.

Next Gluttony, a man in yellow and silver, with wine-coloured cloak, who lurches on his way, alternately stuffing his mouth with food and guzzling draughts of wine, until even his hardened stomach revolts in bitter complaint.

Now comes Wrath, a woman in flaming red, bearing in her hands a dagger and smoking torch. She whirls about in ferocious rage, sowing fire and destruction with her smoking brand, the while her gleaming dagger stabs the air with murderous hate.

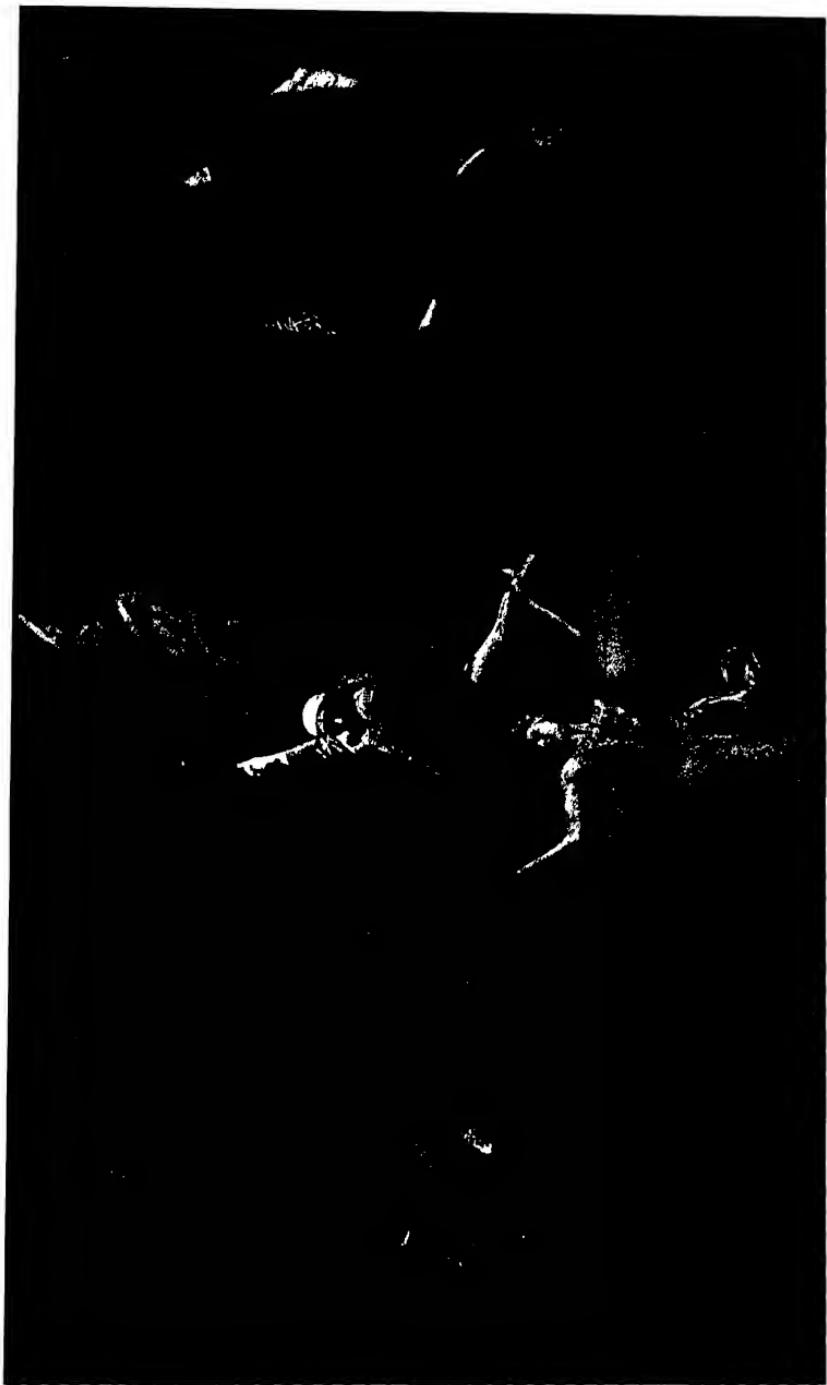
Follows Lechery, in blue and white with a burning heart embroidered on his breast. He leers at every woman in this fantastic court and tempts them with a thousand wanton follies.

In his wake comes Avarice, dressed in the yellow hue of gold, with a cloak of silver tissue. He clutches a bag of golden coins, whose metallic chink makes merry music in his ears, and stirs his withered shanks to dance.

Now comes Envy in green, her robe powdered with baleful eyes, her breast a nesting place for venomous snakes. She moves slowly, biting her nails and gnashing her teeth.

Last of all comes Pride herself, dressed in yellow, her bosom sparkling with jewels and on her head a waving plume. Attended by her vicious courtiers, she dances slowly, holding a mirror into which she repeatedly gazes.

Suddenly there is a burst of discordant music and a messenger dashes in to inform the Queen that two new arrivals pray admittance to her presence. Trumpets sound a fanfare and Duessa enters, attended by the Red Cross Knight, bearing





the shield of Faithless. Pride greets the newcomers with disdain, but her courtiers are lavish in the entertainment of their guests, in particular of the Knight's lady, of whose real character they are well aware. Duessa and St. George express their love in a dance.

At this point Joyless enters and, recognising the shield of Faithless, resolves to wreak vengeance on St. George. They fight, St. George striving to defend himself with the shield of Faithless. Pride intervenes and hands St. George his accustomed shield in exchange for that of Faithless. The fight is resumed and now Duessa reveals her true character by striving to stab St. George in the back, but it is the Saracen himself who falls. Duessa, filled with anguish at the death of her lover, falls on his body, kissing his face and frenziedly shaking his shoulders in endeavour to restore him to life.

St. George, filled with the bitterness of disillusion, drives Duessa away. Pride goes to him and languorously proffering the shield of Faithless, insinuates that he should become her protector and lover. But the Red Cross Knight raises his sword crosswise, forces the Queen backwards and threatens gaping courtiers who retreat in confusion and dismay. Duessa falls to the ground in a swoon. The motley courtiers shuffle away in confusion and dismay, bearing with them the dead Joyless with Duessa crawling after them. St. George, now alone, falls on his knees and, again holding his sword crosswise, seeks forgiveness and strength in prayer.

The fourth scene shows the rocky pass near the Palace of Pride. When the curtain rises, Lawless is seen performing a series of martial exercises in homage to the memory of his two dead brothers. Archimago's bats come fluttering in, heralding the approach of their master, still in the guise of the Red Cross Knight and Una. Lawless, instantly recognising St. George, dashes forward and, cleaving at his helmet, fells him with a single blow. Una kneels beside the stricken knight and fearfully raises his visor to disclose to her astonished gaze the grey hairs of Archimago.

While the old enchanter is mourned by his faithful bats,

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Lawless lays violent hands on Una and unveils her features. At this moment the real St. George enters, swiftly overcomes the Saracen knight, and strikes him dead. The Lovers, reconciled, fall in each other's arms. The light slowly fades as, arm in arm, they walk away into the deepening gloom. On the night air is borne the sound of distant bells.

The final scene shows the banks of a river, on the far side of which stands the House of Holiness, its pale spires silhouetted against a red sky. Now comes Faith, Hope, and Charity, respectively attired in yellow, blue and cerise, and white, each with their attendants in nun-like flowing robes, who move solemnly in graceful patterns, then form into line to welcome St. George and Una, wearing a pink and gold bodice, her hair confined in a golden circlet. Against this background of softly-flowing robes, St. George raises Una shoulder-high then gently sets her down, whereupon they kneel in prayer, while the holy women, led by Faith, Hope, and Charity, come one by one to bestow their blessings. Then the lovers are left alone for a brief space to their parting embrace, for duty calls and the Knight may not tarry. The holy women return bearing the Knight's weapons, which Una hands to St. George one by one. Once more girded for the fight he resumes his mission, to seek out and destroy Evil in its every guise.



When Ashton was a guest at the home of Miss Langley Moore, he was attracted by a fine edition of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, which he noticed in her library. His hostess observed that it was a book well worthy of his attention, since it offered several possible themes for ballets. Indeed she would contrive a scenario for him and send it on. Miss Moore kept her promise and Ashton accepted her theme. There remained to choose two other collaborators. He invited William Walton to compose the music, and John Piper to design the scenery and costumes.

The Quest is a romantic ballet contrived from a group of stanzas in the *Faerie Queene*. It is largely the adventures of the

BALLET BY FREDERICK ASHTON

Red Cross Knight and Una and the Lion, but the Lion proved an intractable animal to translate into choreographic terms and had to be eliminated. *The Quest* is the story of a knight errant's contest with the forces of black magic, of Christianity battling with evil, with even a further topical suggestion, at the time of its production, of the Allies' struggle with the Axis Powers.

The ballet was produced under considerable difficulties, because Ashton, who was then serving in the Royal Air Force and received special leave of absence for the sole purpose of producing this ballet, was pressed for time and worked on the ballet piecemeal as he received the music from Walton. Each number was sent off as completed and very often Ashton himself met the train carrying the precious package in order to have it in his possession at the earliest possible moment. Sometimes there were hitches when the composer found himself temporarily unable to develop a theme as he wished, then Ashton had correspondingly to break off in the full tide of his choreographic inspiration. Moreover, it was not until his own work was completed, that he was able to consider the score as a whole. It is only fair that such facts should be considered in making an appraisal of Ashton's work.

The music has a strongly rhythmic texture and is highly descriptive of the varying moods of the different scenes. The most successful tone pictures are the first scene with its brooding atmosphere of magical influences, Saint George's encounters with the Saracen knights, and the final episode with its austere and deeply religious mood.

Piper's contribution is uneven. Some of his settings, like those for the first and last scenes are imaginative, appropriate, and theatrically effective, but the scene of the Palace of Pride is disappointing. The costumes are equally varied in merit. Those for the Saracen knights are excellent, as are those for the figures of Faith, Hope, and Charity, but the costumes for the Duessa, the Hermaphrodites, and the majority of the Sins are frankly undistinguished.

One defect of *The Quest* is that it presumes the spectator to

be conversant with Spenser's text, since without such previous knowledge it is not easy to grasp the reason for Archimago's communings with evil spirits in order to enlist their aid against the Red Cross Knight and Una, or the purpose of Saint George's unceasing quest, or the importance of Duessa and the three Saracen knights.

Choreographically considered, the weakest point in this ballet is to be found in its most important scene, the dances for the Sins in the Palace of Pride, where it is difficult to resist the impression that on this occasion Ashton's resources and powers of invention have not responded to his demands with their customary vigour.

The dance of the Hermaphrodites, doubtless inspired by one of the fantastic ballets devised for Louis XIII of France, so far from establishing a vicious atmosphere, is very insipid fare and merely suggests a number of young girls in fancy dress.

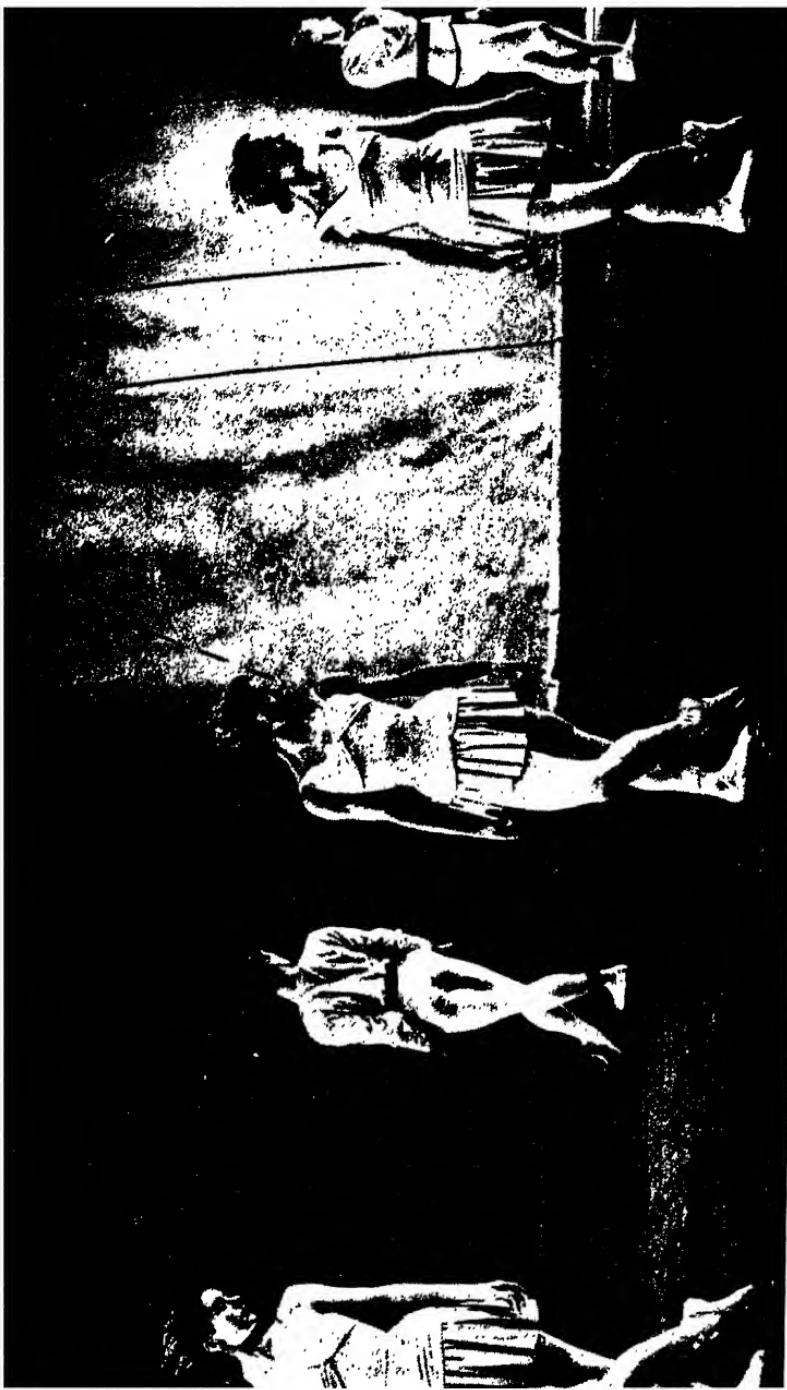
The dances of the Seven Deadly Sins are of indifferent quality, with the single exception of that for Wrath. The movements employed to suggest a particular sin are either too obvious or too realistic, and, when realistic, as in the case of Gluttony, the actions assigned to the character are repugnant, to say the least. It is certainly no light task to arrange a dance indicative of Sloth, or Gluttony, or Lechery, or Avarice, or Envy. Even so, I still feel that Avarice can be suggested by some more subtle method than the shaking of a bag of coins, and that Envy can be conveyed otherwise than by glaring at the bystanders and biting the knuckles of one hand. It is probable that the solution of the problem lies in arranging group dances expressive of each sin, instead of employing a succession of *solos*.

The mimed passages and the combats are well contrived, the shields being used most effectively, while the final scene with its soft colours and flowing movements breathes a sense of purity and a deeply religious feeling reminiscent of an illuminated page from a mediæval missal.



[Photo: I

SCENE FROM "SYMPHONIC VARIATIONS"



SYMPHONIC VARIATIONS

Ballet in 1 Scene.

Music: César Franck.

Scenery and costumes: Sophie Fedorovich.

Choreography: Frederick Ashton.

*First produced: Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London,
April 24th, 1946.*

ARTISTES

Margot Fonteyn, Pamela May, Moira Shearer, Michael Somes,
Henry Danton, Brian Shaw.

The setting is simple and effective. Both backcloth and wings present an expanse of translucent green. The wings are plain but the backcloth is relieved by a pattern of looped parallel lines drawn in black, some lines being continuous, some dotted. The design resembles the plotting by a physicist of lines of magnetic force. There are six dancers, three girls and three youths, in simple tunics and hose of white. At the rise of the curtain the dancers are arranged in a pentagonal figure. The three girls stand down-stage in a line parallel to the audience, thus: Shearer, Fonteyn, May. One youth stands up-stage at centre left, one at centre right; the remaining youth, Somes, stands close to the centre of the backcloth, his back to the audience.

The dancers remain motionless until the piano is heard, when the three girls dance. They rest when the orchestra resumes. When the theme of the *variation* begins, Somes

THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

dances and moves down-stage towards the three girls, dancing with each in turn, first with Shearer, then with May, and lastly with Fonteyn. Then he remains stationary, while the girls revolve about him in varied poses. Afterwards each girl, supported by Somes, executes a series of rapid *pirouettes*, right to left, and then to centre, the whole concluding with a group. This opening section concludes with all four dancers walking slowly down-stage in a straight line, each girl taking up her position on the right of the youth, and ends with Fonteyn's being carried to the front left corner.

Next comes a short introduction during which Somes moves up-stage to centre, while the other two youths close in so that the three form a straight line parallel to the audience. Follows a *variation* for the three youths, the principal step being *doubles ronds de jambes sautés*. Somes dances to the piano part, his fellows to the orchestra.

There is another *variation* in which the youths propound a theme, to which the girls make reply. At the end of this number the dancers are grouped in a square, with Shearer and May at centre right.

Follows a *variation* for May and Shearer. This consists of a series of rapid *pizzicato*-like movements, which provide an accompaniment to the orchestral theme, the dancers moving on a diagonal line forward to the left front corner. The other dancers dance quietly on place to the orchestral theme.

The next *variation* is a *pas de trois* for May, Shearer, and one of the youths, who joins them from the right back corner. The youth at left back moves to centre back. The rhythm of the music is accented by the dancing of the youth and by the remaining three dancers at the corners of the square, while May and Shearer dance lightly around the youth.

Now comes a *variation* for the youth at centre back, which concludes with a *chainé* (*petits tours*, *coupés jetés*, and *jetés*) round the stage. At the end of his dance, all three youths move up-stage and turn their backs to the audience. During the next *variation* by Fonteyn, the youths "echo" their first *variation* quietly at the back, facing back.

Fonteyn moves to right back corner and begins her *variation*, which is danced to solo piano. At the end she is joined by Somes who carries her to right front corner. Then they begin a *pas de deux*, during which she is lifted slightly from the stage level while they move in a circle clockwise, next forward and back parallel to the audience, then diagonally from right back corner to left front corner, then in a circle anti-clockwise to left back corner, when she is carried in a sustained lift to right front corner.

When the Interlude begins, all the dancers form a chain and run lightly round the stage in a circle clockwise. The chain dissolves into three couples, the youths lifting the girls forward. They again form into a chain and the whole movement is repeated, again dissolving so that the dancers now move parallel to the audience, first a line of three girls, then a line of three youths. They again form into a chain and run in centre clockwise to back, with slight movements to right and left. Then all six dancers move up-stage, the three youths forming a line parallel to the audience, the three girls passing between them to take up a position parallel to the audience, each girl with her own partner. This pose is held during the opening bars of the Finale.

The centre couple move to centre back, while the two outer couples begin the movement of the Finale. Fonteyn and Somes dance to the solo piano, then they rest and the dance is taken up by the two remaining couples.

Now Somes comes forward in a series of *soubresauts* travelled down stage and followed by *pirouettes à terre* and *tours en l'air*. He is joined by the other five dancers, all of whom move back stage in supported *pirouettes*. There is another solo piano part danced by Fonteyn and Somes, during which each describes a figure of eight about the other two couples.

Follows a concerted movement by all six dancers, the three youths and three girls interchanging in various ways and directions. They then form a chain and run to centre stage, when the girls run down-stage while the youths go up-stage

THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

to form the same pentagonal figure with which the ballet began.

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Symphonic Variations, arranged to César Franck's composition of the same name, marks a new departure in Ashton's work. It is his first essay in pure abstract ballet and he has been at pains rigidly to eschew those sentiments of love and passion which have inspired so many of his previous works. This ballet is an attempt to evoke the spirit of youth, but an idyllic youth concerned solely with the grace and beauty of movement. The whole work is conceived in a mood of lofty exaltation. It has the clarity, the purity, and the brilliance of a piece of burnished crystal.

The decorative element of the ballet contributed by Sophie Federovich is a vital part of it and a definite factor in the establishment of the appropriate mood. The costumes, entirely white, are conceived in terms of the utmost simplicity. The girls wear ballet shoes, hose, and open-necked, armless tunics with a little drapery outlining the breasts and a short pleated skirt in the classic style reaching midway between hip and knee. The youths wear vests, hose, and ballet shoes. Two of the youths have the left arm and breast bare, the right arm being covered with a full sleeve. Somes's vest has an open neck and full sleeves. The youth's costumes are slightly relieved by a belt, armlet, and anklet of black.

Symphonic Variations, having no plot, does not lend itself to description, but I have attempted to record something of its pattern and basic evolutions in the belief that they may be of interest to the reader. This ballet differs from many in that it is continuous. The six dancers who present it do not leave the stage until the fall of the curtain. It is true that at times certain dancers are reduced to immobility, but even so they still form part of the choreographic structure and cannot relax their attention. Hence this work is one of the most difficult and exhausting ballets for the dancer. There





SCENE FROM "COMUS", SC. I

[Photo: Gordon Anthon]

BALLETS BY FREDERICK ASHTON

are several unusual "lifts" in this work, for instance, the carrying of a dancer just off the ground, which imposes a severe strain on her partner, however effortless it may appear to the spectator.

The prime virtue of this ballet is its flow. It is like a lyric work for six singers, in which now some, now all, take part, the voices rising and falling in cadence with the music. There are no tricks of technique to astonish, no strange massing of human bodies to bewilder. Although Ashton's invention never flags, everything is as calm, ordered, and impersonal as time itself, and who would believe that a mere handful of dancers could so completely dominate the stage; all for one, and one for all. Here is a ballet in which the beauty of the pure classical ballet is exploited to the full. *Symphonic Variations* represents the zenith of Ashton's choreographic achievements to date.

BALLETS BY ROBERT HELPMANN

COMUS

Masque in 1 Act and 2 Scenes after Milton.

Music: Purcell, arranged by Constant Lambert.

Scenery and costumes: Oliver Messel.

Choreography: Robert Helpmann.

First produced: New Theatre, London, January 14th, 1942.

CHARACTERS

Attendant Spirit	.	.	Margaret Dale
Comus	.	.	Robert Helpmann
The Lady	.	.	Margot Fonteyn
Her Brothers	.	.	{ John Hart David Paltenghi
Sabrina	.	.	Moyra Fraser

Rout attending Comus, Nymphs attending Sabrina.

The curtain rises on a stage dark as night, save for a blush of light in the centre. This radiance broadens to reveal the presence of a Sprite, the unearthly pallor of her features heightened by her silver head-dress and blue-grey tunic. The stage, too, lightens and now it becomes possible to see the actual setting: a wooded vale of enchanting beauty, with rising ground on either side. In the background are masses of trees in full foliage. The whole prospect is a blend of varied shades of russet, blue, and green. The Sprite moves slowly to and fro, sometimes walking on tip-toe, sometimes

turning, her bare arms extended now to this direction, now to that. She vanishes amid the trees.

A burst of lively music and the glade resounds to the tipsy laughter and jigging feet of Comus's rout of monsters—men and women in Stuart dress but variously headed like a pig, cat, or bear. In their midst comes Comus himself, a youth of rare beauty, in doublet and hose coloured like the purple grape, his dark curling locks entwined with grapes and their leaves. From his shoulders falls a wine-coloured cloak. Summoning his followers to his side, he bids them devote the night to their pleasure. Here follows an unusual effect in a ballet in that the interpreter of Comus delivers the famous lines from Milton's poem, beginning:

“The star that bids the shepherd fold
Now the top of heaven doth hold . . .”

and ending:

“What hath night to do with sleep?
Night hath better sweets to prove,
Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.
Come, let us our rites begin:
‘Tis only daylight that makes sin.
Come, knit hands, and beat the ground
In a light fantastic round.”

Obedient to his command, his creatures form a circle, along the inner rim of which he bounds, sometimes leaping, sometimes turning in mid-air, his cloak a writhing flame in the gust of his movements. Then he drops to his knees and rolls on the ground, to receive the endearing embraces of four of his women creatures. The other members of the rout pair off in amorous frolic.

Suddenly Comus, hearing the approach of alien footsteps, makes a warning gesture. A prudish spoil-sport would mar all. So with backward glances in the direction of the newcomer, he leads his vicious crew to another glade. Stealthily, crawling on hands and knees, they shuffle in his wake.

Enter a Lady of modest bearing, habited all in white. Pale and anxious, she tip-toes slowly forward, peering from side to side. You must know that she is seeking her two brothers who, having left her awhile to gather cooling fruits, have failed to return. The approaching darkness of night makes her apprehensive for her safety. Wearily she is about to seek a new path when Comus, who has assumed the guise of a simple shepherd, appears before her. Learning of her plight, he gallantly offers his aid, which she gladly accepts. Ravished by her beauty, he is resolved to make her his queen.

Swiftly he extends his forefingers towards the Lady and lays upon her a subtle spell. Then, her will become his, she follows him as though in a dream, while he guides her—not to her brothers, but to his palace of vice.

Hardly have Comus and the too-trusting maiden passed from view, when her brothers walk swiftly in. They resemble two cavaliers from a painting by Van Dyck. They, too, dislike the night with its possible lurking robbers. So they draw swords and stand on guard, thrusting at every nodding branch and threatening shadow. Reassured, they sheath their blades. Suddenly, the Sprite, shimmering with light, appears. She warns the brothers of Comus's intent to work his witch-cries on their sister and offers to guide them to her. "Lead on!" they cry, and follow swiftly her direction, their swords extended in posture of attack.

Now we come to Comus's Palace, a great arched hall, coloured a misty grey-green, relieved by a gilded table set with the choicest food and wine.

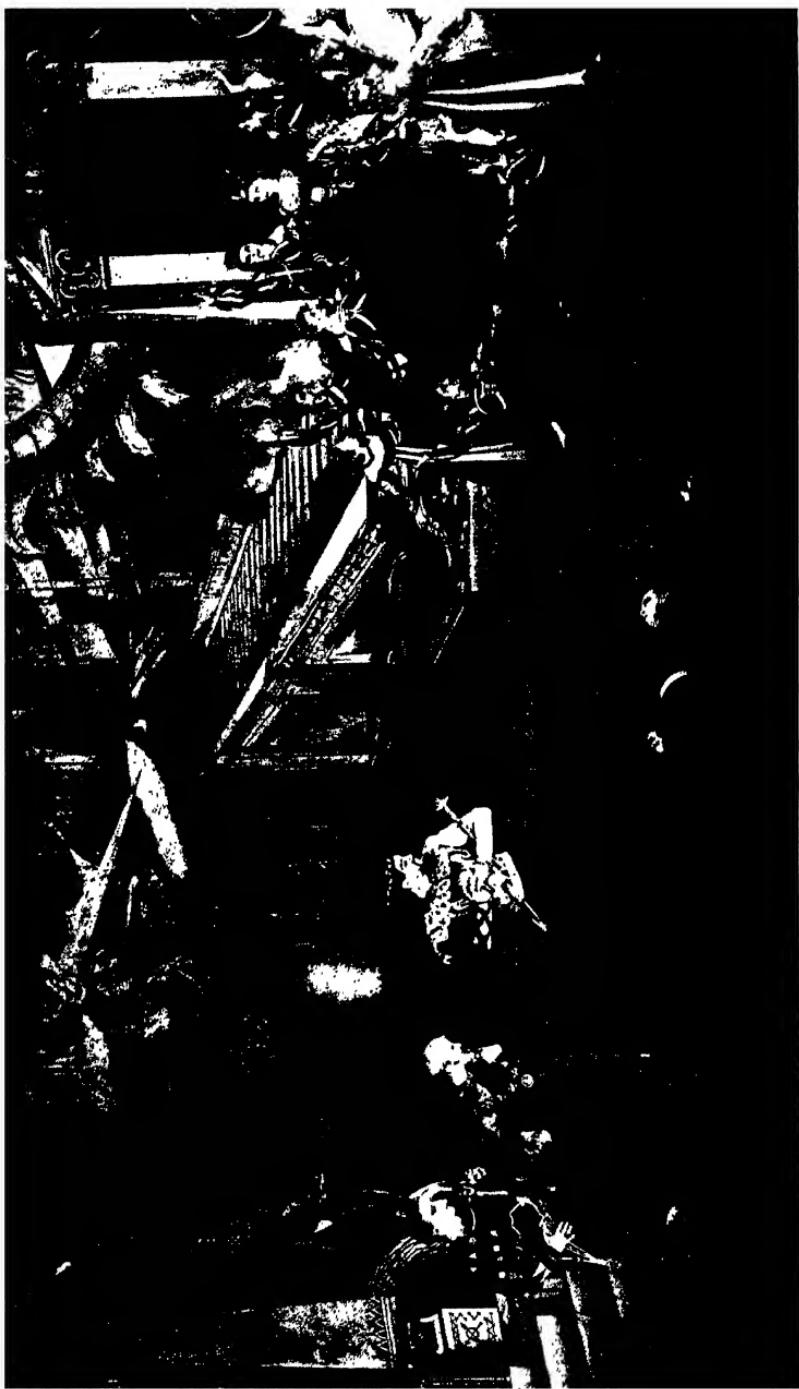
A gay melody strikes up and Comus's creatures trip forward in little groups. They kiss and hug, then some seat themselves on the table, while others dance a lively jig.

The music grows more solemn and the Lady enters attended by Comus, now dressed entirely in cardinal red, although his hair is still decked with clusters of grapes. Swiftly the creatures cease their play and turn their backs. Then all at once they turn and confront the Lady with a bold appraising stare. Comus passes his hand before her face and lifts the spell. No



[Photo: Tunbridge-Sedgwick]

SCENE FROM "HAMLET"



longer bemused she draws back in horror, then turns enquiringly towards the shepherd to find him transformed into a prince. Before she can recover from the shock of so great a surprise Comus takes her hand in his and leads her in a dance, during which he attempts to fondle her. His creatures approve their master's cunning wiles and shake with ribald laughter. Slowly Comus guides the Lady to the banqueting-table upon which she, still dignified though fearful, is made to stand, her wrists fastened behind her. Two of the men creatures mount guard on either side of her, the rest kneel in mock homage.

Comus dances alone, then, taking in his hand a cup of wine infused with the juices of potent herbs, he bids his companions fill their cups and pledge him royally. At the same moment a crown is set upon the Lady's head. Then, in a seductive voice, Comus delivers the famous invocation to drink, which begins :

“Why are you vexed, lady? Why do you frown?
and ends:

“Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight
Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taste.”

As he proffers the cup, one sip of which will place the Lady in his power, she coldly averts her lips. At the same moment the Sprite and the two brothers appear at the Lady's side and dash the cup from Comus's hand. Swiftly he steals away, while the brothers put the creatures to flight.

A moment of darkness supervenes, then, in the returning light, we see the brothers return and joyfully greet their sister, but, alas, her limbs are seized with a magic weariness. To banish this enchantment, the Sprite calls upon Sabrina and her water-nymphs. She summons her with rippling movements of her arms. In answer, the nymphs, led by Sabrina, enter in two lines, each appropriately clad in silver and translucent green. They all dance and then Sabrina alone.

The Lady recovers the strength in her limbs and is lifted

down from the table by her brothers. Sabrina and her nymphs unite in a group and the Lady dances alone. Then her brothers join her in a courtly measure. Again they lift her upon the banqueting-table, from which point of vantage she may watch the triumph of chastity over vice, for now Comus's creatures crawl past her on hands and knees, cringing and shuddering, as the Sprite drives them hence with searing lashes from a searching whip.

Behind a pillar appears Comus on his knees, one hand up-raised in a gesture of hopeless despair.



The theme of *Comus* is based on the well-known masque written by John Milton, which was first performed, with music by Henry Lawes, at the entertainment given by the Earl of Bridgewater at Ludlow in 1634. Milton's work, a lyric poem in the form of a play, has often been revived in connection with outdoor dramatic entertainments, for which it is ideally suited, but I think this is the first occasion when the masque has been used as a theme for ballet, the action being closely allied to that of Milton's poem.

The music consists of a selection of airs from the theatrical works of Henry Purcell (1658-1695), admirably arranged and orchestrated by Constant Lambert. The principal sources were *The Fairy Queen*, *The Indian Queen*, *Diocletian*, *The Tempest*, *The Gordian Knot Untied*, *The Virtuous Wife*, and *The Married Beau*. The first five are operas; the remainder, music to plays. So adroitly has Lambert matched Purcell's music to the contrasting moods of the theme that it is difficult to believe that the music was not inspired by the actual situations presented.

The settings of Oliver Messel are both distinguished and theatrically effective. The first scene is a charming landscape in the style of Rubens. It is sad to record that the original design was stolen during the dress rehearsal. The second scene reveals the influence of Piranesi, but the banqueting-table suggests a property from Beardsley's *Under the Hill*.

The dresses, by the same designer, vary considerably in merit, partly due to the quality of some of the materials, partly because the rich baroque setting of the second scene demands an equal richness of costume. Easily the best costumes are those worn by *Comus*. That of the first scene, baroque in conception, suits Helpmann to perfection, but the mere doffing of the jerkin is hardly sufficient to suggest that *Comus* is now disguised as a shepherd. A character so chaste and timid as the *Lady* would certainly refuse the services of so fantastic and fascinating a person as guide.

The white costume designed for the *Lady* is well suited to Fonteyn's chaste beauty, but the folds of the skirt do not fall well, and the semi-transparency of the dress is surely at variance with the impression of modesty which is the essence of the character.

Comus is described as a masque, which is generally a hint to the spectator to be prepared for less dancing than usual. In actual fact, *Comus* is conceived not in terms of dancing, but primarily in terms of dramatic movement and mimed scenes, varied with short dances. *Comus* is the key character, and perhaps not unnaturally, whenever he is on the stage, everything is subordinated to his actions. This stressing of *Comus*, however, tends to weaken the production as a whole, because it has the curious effect of suggesting a living being surrounded by a group of puppets. This impression is heightened when Helpmann makes his two speeches, because, since the other characters do not speak, they acquire an immediate inferiority from being dumb. It must be recorded that these speeches are admirably spoken.

Comus is a distinct achievement for one making his first essay in the difficult and complex art of choreography. Helpmann has not invented any new steps and the dancers move almost entirely on straight lines, but his keen sense of the theatre allied to his strong personality, his unusual abilities as a mime, and his knowledge of dancing, enable him to present his conception to good purpose and telling effect.

Some of the dances are weak in arrangement, particularly

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that for the Sprite, which suffers from an excess of pointing the forefinger in innumerable directions, so that the Brothers must be quite bewildered as to which road she wishes them to take. The dance, too, of the Brothers is almost childish in its simplicity. On the other hand the method used in the second scene by Comus's creatures to suggest their vicious nature, is surely far too realistic, to say the least. The success of the production is due to three main factors. First, Purcell's splendid music; second, Messel's attractive settings; and third, Helpmann's keen sense of the theatre.

HAMLET

Ballet in 1 Scene.

Music: P. I. Tchaikovsky.

Scenery and costumes: Leslie Hurry.

Choreography: Robert Helpmann.

First produced: New Theatre, London, May 19th, 1942.

CHARACTERS

King of Denmark . . .	David Paltenghi
Hamlet (Son of the late	
King, Nephew to the	
present King) . . .	Robert Helpmann
Polonius (Lord Chamber-	
lain)	Gordon Hamilton
Laertes (Son to Polonius) .	John Hart
Grave-digger	Leo Kersley
Ghost of Hamlet's Father .	Alexis Rassine
Queen of Denmark) and	
Mother to Hamlet) . .	Celia Franca

BALLET BY ROBERT HELPMANN

Ophelia (Daughter to Po-	
lonius)	Margot Fonteyn
Page	Margaret Dale
	Court Ladies, Pall-bearers

The curtain rises on a darkened stage, except in the centre where four cloaked captains, illumined by a shaft of ghostly moonlight, are seen supporting a bier at the head of which lolls the livid features of the dying Hamlet, slain by Laertes's poisoned blade. The bearers tread slowly on to be swallowed up in the surrounding gloom.

The stage gradually lightens to make visible to us Hamlet's last thoughts, when he relives in a few brief moments of time the chief incidents of a crowded life, not set out in due order and perspective as they actually occurred, but confused and distorted as they would appear in the fevered imagination of a dying man.

The scene depicts a fantastic vision of the hall in the Danish castle of Elsinore. To left and right is a lofty doorway flanked by a short flight of steps. In the right background is a great stone staircase, covered with a crimson carpet, which sweeps upwards to an upper hall. In the centre back is a rounded archway.

Enter a Grave-digger, bearing a spade. He is a strange figure in doublet and hose, and wears a low-crowned hat peaked at each end; the rear is in the form of a skull, while the front is shaped like a jester's cap. A little unsteady from the effect of drink, the Grave-digger looks to right and left, then departs.

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, appears in the left doorway. He wears doublet and hose of solemn black out of respect for his father, the late King, who died strangely some two months since. Hamlet walks slowly down the steps and into the hall like a man in a trance, his hands outstretched as though to grasp a phantom of his imagination. Suddenly he clutches his shoulder as a sharp pain reminds him of Laertes's deadly stroke, then covers his face with his hands in an agony of recollection.

The Grave-digger returns, bowling a skull along the ground and following in its wake. He catches the skull and, squatting before Hamlet, proffers it for his inspection. Then, tossing the skull into the air, he again bowls it along the ground and rolls after it, turning head over heels. Hamlet follows these proceedings with distracted gaze. A cock crows and associating this with the likely appearance of the ghost of the late King, the Grave-digger takes to flight.

In the left doorway appears the ghost of Hamlet's father, a figure in armour of silvery sheen and wearing a high-spiked crown. The Ghost extends his arms towards Hamlet, who feels himself drawn backwards by some supernatural power. He turns, remarks the Ghost, and falls upon his knees. The Ghost approaches and whispering into his son's ear, reveals to him how he was murdered by his own brother, Hamlet's uncle, who has since wedded the widowed Queen. The Ghost bids Hamlet revenge his foul and most unnatural murder, which he swears to do. The Ghost retreats, beating his breast in insistence that Hamlet shall reiterate his oath. The Prince, believing the Ghost to have vanished into the earth, beats the ground in affirmation of his promise, then falls back exhausted.

The scene lightens a little. Polonius and Laertes enter at the left, while the Queen and King Claudius appear in the doorway at the right. Hamlet, observing the King, rises in anger. The King kisses his Queen and descends the steps to greet the Chamberlain and his son; the latter craves leave to return to France, whence he has come to attend the King's coronation. As Claudius passes Hamlet, their glances clash. The King grants Laertes permission to go, whereupon he exits.

Now Polonius approaches the King and counsels him to leave owing to Hamlet's growing strangeness of manner. The King withdraws, but Polonius remains watching the Prince. Hamlet, believing he observes the Queen, his mother, goes to greet her, but some trick of his disordered imagination changes her into Polonius's daughter, his once beloved Ophelia. He falls back and now the Queen and Ophelia are

seen descending the stairs. Hamlet is confused, feeling drawn by turns first to the Queen and then to Ophelia. The Queen and Ophelia withdraw, then the former exits. Hamlet turns aside and kneels, his features clouded in thought.

Laertes enters and is welcomed by Ophelia, who dances with him. But Polonius intervenes and, bidding his son prepare for his journey, dismisses him, with his blessing. Then the Chamberlain leads Ophelia to Hamlet. They express their mutual affection in a dance. Polonius departs and is next seen in attendance on the King, lurking in the right-hand doorway, spying upon the lovers. Hamlet, observing the conspirators, and believing Ophelia privy to their plan, brutally thrusts her aside. Ophelia, deeply wounded at Hamlet's change of mood, rushes out.

Enter Polonius left, and King and Queen right. Polonius presents Hamlet, who is thanked by their majesties for the play he has contrived for their entertainment, and which is about to be performed. Ophelia comes in, attended by a bevy of court ladies in crimson gowns, banded with gold. From the opposite side comes the Ghost, followed by another band of court ladies. A page advances and begs a patient hearing "for us and our tragedy." Hamlet, impatient for the play to begin, pushes the page aside.

Ophelia is transformed into the Player Queen, while the Ghost fills the role of the Player King. They embrace. Then the Player King lies down to sleep. The Player Queen kisses him, sets his orb by his side, and leaves him, to kneel a little distance away. Claudius stretches out his hand to seize the orb, while Hamlet embraces Ophelia. Then Hamlet and Claudius simultaneously crawl towards the sleeping Player King and simultaneously pour poison into his ear. Again Claudius seizes the orb and once more Hamlet embraces the Player Queen. The court ladies run about in agitation and bear away the Player Queen and King.

Claudius, deeply affected by the allusion in the play to his great wickedness, goes to the left-hand doorway where he prays for his sins to be forgiven. Hamlet, seeing the King,

draws his dagger, intending to kill him, but resolves to delay his vengeance. Then espying the Queen and Polonius at the right-hand doorway in earnest conversation, he bounds up the steps and stabs Polonius with his dagger. Hamlet staggers back, followed by the Queen. Meanwhile the Ghost appears through the right-hand doorway, descends the stairs, crosses the hall and disappears. Hamlet, at first seemingly entranced, follows the Ghost, then, as though overcome by some emotional weakness, sinks to his knees and lies on the steps.

Enter at left Claudius followed by Laertes, who threatens to kill him, but Gertrude rushes forward and intervenes. Now comes Ophelia, distraught, her dress awry and strangely bedecked with a chain of wild flowers. She dances and presents some flowers to Laertes and to the King. The King, enraged at the tragic results of Hamlet's ill-treatment, and the Queen, deeply moved by Ophelia's pitiful state, exit. Ophelia kisses Laertes with affection and departs. Her brother grimly draws his dagger and vows vengeance.

Hamlet rises as a funeral procession files slowly through the left-hand doorway. The King enters with a veiled female figure. Then, led by the Grave-digger, and escorted by the ladies of the court, there is borne a bier on which lies the body of the Queen. This, however, is a flight of Hamlet's fevered imagination, for it is really Ophelia who is dead and who should lie on the bier. As the procession moves slowly onwards, Laertes, his rage whipped by the spectacle, goes to attack Hamlet, but is restrained by the King who, handing him his own dagger, which is poisoned, leads him away with the promise of a better opportunity to indulge his hate. Hamlet, left alone, whirls about the hall in expression of the confused state of his mind, then stops and resumes his bitter brooding.

The court ladies enter from both sides. Dancing to a lively measure, they bear cups of wine. Now come the King and Queen, gazing at each other with affection, while Laertes walks beside the King, holding his hand. The Queen kisses Hamlet, and the King assures Laertes that all will be well.

The King then offers Hamlet a poisoned cup, which he refuses. The Queen, unaware that the cup is poisoned, drinks Hamlet's health. Claudius, seized with fear, tries to stop her, but too late. As the Queen walks up the steps to the right-hand doorway, the King follows her. Meanwhile, Hamlet walks to the left-hand corner to take his foil from a kneeling page, while Laertes creeps slowly behind him and stabs him in the back. Hamlet turns, wrests the dagger from Laertes and stabs him in turn. The King and Queen and their Court witnessing this occurrence are filled with horror. Hamlet armed with the still bloody dagger advances menacingly upon the King, who tries to evade him. Hamlet dashes up the left-hand steps. The King tries to rush past him, but is stabbed and totters down the steps to fall dead. The Queen, now feeling the effects of the poison, staggers down the right-hand steps, collapses to the ground and dies, the cup rolling along the ground.

Hamlet seeing his mother dead, is about to go towards her when the Grave-digger comes in bearing a skull and a flagon of wine. He sits at Hamlet's feet, fills the skull with wine and proffers it to him to drink. When he refuses, the Grave-digger drinks the wine himself. Hamlet, now conscious of the poison of the dagger-thrust working in his veins, staggers to the centre of the hall where he collapses and dies.

The light fades except in the centre where four cloaked captains, illumined by a shaft of ghostly moonlight, are seen supporting a bier at the head of which lolls the livid features of the dying Hamlet. The bearers tread slowly on to be swallowed up in the surrounding gloom.



What strikes one most about this presentation is the vital contribution made by Leslie Hurry with his setting and costumes. The scenery creates immediately a sense of unrest, of lurking menace, of fateful and fearful events impending. How vividly, too, it suggests the twisted sub-conscious thoughts of a corrupt Court opposed by an embittered man,

dominated by the lust for bloody vengeance. Indeed, this setting is so powerful that it tends to overshadow the choreography.

The costumes, inspired by Renaissance modes, are beautiful in design, colour, and cut. The Court characters are allotted rich blues and reds, heightened with arabesques of gold; the Commoners are clad in earthy shades of green, brown, and red.

The music used is that of Tchaikovsky's fantasy-overture, *Hamlet*.

Helpmann, the choreographer, adroitly disarms criticism by citing as the source of his inspiration the following quotation from Shakespeare's play:

For in that sleep of death, what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil
Must give us pause.

Thus we may not consider Helpmann's work as a choreographic version of Shakespeare's play, for it is an attempt to present the fevered thoughts of a dying man, under which influence the events of a lifetime are thrown out of their true sequence like a pack of shuffled cards; and appear in fitful flashes on the screen of the tortured mind like a film projected by a defective lighting generator.

It has been said, and there is a good deal of truth in it, that a really good ballet needs no programme note. On this count, Helpmann's production would fail, for it would be quite unintelligible to a spectator who had not read or seen the play. In fact, this *Hamlet* is not a ballet, but a spectacle. It is a series of mimed episodes linked together and varied by *ensembles* and occasional short dances. The mainspring of a ballet should be *dance*; here, it is *drama*.

It can, of course, be argued that there are many kinds of dancing and that one can "dance" with one's head, arms, or body, without of necessity using the feet to glide, or run, or hop, or leap. That is true, but I submit that dramatic or expressive moment does not in itself constitute dancing, it

must be fused with the music. A great deal of Helpmann's composition is mimed drama to the accompaniment of music, and not expressive movement springing from and governed by the mood and rhythmic pattern of the music.

The ballet begins, as we have seen, with a dim-out of Hamlet's dying body being borne away. Then follows a flash-back which records his last subconscious thoughts, ending with a return to the opening dim-out. This flash-back resembles a slow-motion film in reverse. That is to say, the chief events of the play's five acts are concentrated in some twenty minutes. That is not unreasonable if it be remembered that we are journeying in a phantom world of the imagination, of subconscious thoughts, where space and time have ceased to exist.

Viewed as a spectacle, this *Hamlet* is an exciting and stimulating work of the theatre. Indeed, one has the impression of watching not a ballet but a well-staged and well-dressed play, or rather melodrama, the words of which are drowned by the music. Helpmann has clearly analysed Hamlet's mental state with the persistence and skill of a psychiatrist, and then devoted no less thought to the problem of sustaining the dramatic interest by combining certain familiar episodes in the plot of the play with the visual presentation of Hamlet's many and varied obsessions of the mind. Thus Helpmann brings out in sharp relief such strange relationships as Hamlet's dual feeling for Gertrude and Ophelia, and Ophelia's attachment to both Hamlet and Laertes; which facts are presented skilfully although perhaps, in the first case, in almost too obvious a manner.

Hamlet affords proofs of Helpmann's progress as a choreographer. The two doors, each with their flight of steps, are used to heighten the dramatic effect by the additional levels provided. This is particularly noticeable in the presentation of the fights and in certain groupings. The plot episodes are well contrived, often with an admirable economy of means, as in the play scene. The *ensemble* of the Court ladies is well arranged, also several of the *soli* and *pas de deux*, and the stage

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picture is always fluid and full of interest. And ever in evidence is Hamlet's sombre figure, wrestling with the terrible demons of his imagination, prompting discord and adding fuel to the fires of hate. And now and again, for a brief space, there appears the grotesque Grave-digger, grim reminder, like the Spielmann in Vollmoeller's *The Miracle*, of the mortality attendant on human endeavour.

MIRACLE IN THE GORBALS

Ballet in 1 Act.

Book: Michael Benthall.

Music: Arthur Bliss.

Scenery and costumes: Edward Burra.

Choreography: Robert Helpmann.

First produced: Prince's Theatre, London, October 26th, 1944.

CHARACTERS

The Suicide	.	.	.	Pauline Clayden
The Lovers	.	.	.	{ Moira Shearer Alexis Rassine
A Beggar	.	.	.	Leslie Edwards
A Street Boy	.	.	.	Gordon Hamilton
The Official	.	.	.	David Paltenghi
The Prostitute	.	.	.	Celia Franca
The Stranger	.	.	.	Robert Helpmann
Factory Girls, Dock Labourers, Street Boys, etc.				

The scene represents a typical group of mean streets in the Gorbals, a slum quarter in Glasgow. To left and right is a built-up set—a block of greenish-grey tenement buildings, with short flights of concrete stairs rising perpendicularly from floor to floor, the lowest giving on to the outside street.

Adjoining the block on the left is a garishly-lighted public bar, which is balanced on the right by a fried-fish shop. The ugly barrack-like lines of the windows are relieved by a few homely garments hung out to dry. The background is formed by a continuation of the street, flanked by two rows of similarly monotonous tenements, reaching to the dockside, with a glimpse of cube-shaped store-houses and factory chimneys in the far distance. It is evening and the occasionally lighted windows or the glare from a door opening on to the stone stairs, cast on the grey street lurid pools of light, thrown into greater relief by the surrounding shadows.

At the rise of the curtain, the quarter is just waking to life. The inhabitants, having finished work for the day, are preparing to enjoy their leisure strolling in the streets. A street-urchin rolls a motor-tyre hoop-wise across the street. He is followed by a noisy band of boys-and girls. Some factory girls, dressed in cheap finery, saunter across the street, chewing gum. An old woman shuffles along, carrying a loaf of bread under one arm. Another woman bears a bottle of whisky. Men in trousers, sweaters and jackets come out of the building, lean against street corners and eye the girls.

Enter a middle-aged man of authoritative demeanour. This official wears a simple brown uniform with a collar of clerical cut. As he moves slowly about the square, his presence exerts a subduing influence upon the passers-by, who nod or bow the head in greeting. A beggar strikes up a quavering tune on his fiddle, only to be jeered at by the boys. The boys begin to fight, but this outbreak is soon quelled by the Official. He goes away, the number of passers-by gradually lessens, and the street takes on an air of unwonted calm.

A door opens on the first floor of the right-hand tenement and a woman emerges, appropriately dressed in scarlet. She descends the stairs and makes her way to the fish-shop where she stands smoking a cigarette. Some of the women inside the shop jeer at the Prostitute, but she is indifferent; various men approach her, but she contemptuously refuses their suggestions. She crosses to the opposite side and

titivates her hair. Young men and their girls pass by, and the urchins again dash in, rolling before them the familiar motor-tyre.

The Official re-enters and walking across the square encounters the Prostitute. His condemning glance disturbs her, but she dismisses the incident with a shrug of the shoulders and stands at the street entrance leading to her abode. A young man greets her and presently they climb the stairs to her room. This transaction is observed by the Official. Meanwhile some of the labourers take their girls to the public-house while others patronise the fish-shop.

Enter a pale forlorn-looking girl in black, who moves aimlessly, as though overwhelmed with her troubles. A man makes advances to her, but she recoils in horror. She strolls towards the docks, her actions spied upon by an inquisitive urchin. A young labourer comes in and stands by the fish-shop, then looks towards the tenement opposite. His girl sees him, descends the stairs, and meets him. They dance together a sentimental number expressive of their innocent romance. Other courting couples pass to and fro in the background. Presently the girl's mother appears at a window and bids her daughter come indoors. The lovers kiss on parting and the young man remains looking toward the room where his sweetheart lives.

Again the square empties and the Prostitute descends the stairs to the street. Seeing the young man alone, she begins to flirt with him. They dance together. The young man, infatuated, is about to accompany the Prostitute to her room, when the Official hurries forward and rescues the young man from committing a grievous sin.

The Prostitute, enraged, attacks the Official, who calms her with the brutal assistance of a dockhand. But the man who lately visited her comes to the Prostitute's aid and attempts to floor her assailant. This leads to a brawl which presently embroils the whole neighbourhood. The Official first orders the Prostitute to leave the street and then gradually quells the tumult. The rioters, ashamed of their outburst, return to their

homes or solace themselves in bar or fish-shop. Peace restored, the Official withdraws.

Suddenly, the inquisitive urchin, who had followed the Girl in Black, comes running back with the alarming news that she has thrown herself into the river. The story spreads like a forest fire and in a few moments the whole neighbourhood is gathered in the street to exchange comments on the situation. Consumed with morbid curiosity, they hurry to the scene of the tragedy. A man picks up a coil of rope, and, accompanied by other men, runs to the dockside. These dramatic incidents are watched by an excited crowd which blocks the end of the street, their mass reactions being reflected in their movements.

The Official returns and is immediately summoned to the scene of the tragedy. The crowd opens and closes as he passes. Again the mass parts as two men come forward bearing the limp body of the Girl in Black; the Official follows in their wake. The Official, finding the girl to be dead, orders her to be placed on the ground, when he covers her face with her neckerchief. Then he offers up a silent prayer, while the crowd reverently bow their heads.

At the back of the crowd appears a newcomer, a Stranger, a poorly dressed pale young man, his bare feet shod with sandals. The bystanders are immediately disturbed by the advent of the stranger. The Official places his hand on the Stranger's shoulder and is at once conscious of a superior force. The Stranger gazes sadly at the still form and, filled with pity that this young life should be cut off at the moment of its flowering, extends his hand and restores the dead to life.

The Official, irritated by the Stranger's intervention, tries to stop him, and, even though he has actually witnessed the miracle performed, refuses to admit it. The crowd, filled with awe, divides into two parallel lines. The Girl slowly rises and gazes at her saviour with joy and gratitude. She expresses in an artless dance her joy at being restored to life. The bystanders, tense with emotion, sway in harmony with the girl's movements. At the end of her dance, they lift into

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the air, first the Girl, then the Stranger. As the latter is lowered to the ground, the Official closes his eyes as if to conceal his burning envy, while the crowd work themselves into a mounting religious hysteria. The Official, feeling his authority usurped, implores the crowd not to be too hasty in their acceptance of what they have just seen. But finding the crowd indifferent to his plea, he bows his head in utter helplessness.

The crowd becomes calmer and the Stranger is regarded with mingled awe and veneration. The Stranger asks the Girl in Black to walk with him. The Official tries to intervene, but his injunction is unheeded. As the couple stroll away, the Official sends one of the urchins to watch and report to him.

The square empties and the Official is left alone, angry and crestfallen. The Prostitute returns. The Official, observing her arrival, determines to spite himself by giving way to temptation. The Prostitute, astonished at his change of attitude, refuses his advances. But he is so persistent that, exulting in her triumph, she finally consents to allow him to accompany her to her room.

The street again fills with a lively throng and dancing couples begin to indulge in a variety of the jitterbug, while the on-lookers noisily clap their hands to the rhythm. The dance ends with the dancers gradually filing out as the music dies down.

The door of the Prostitute's room swings open and the flood of light reveals the Official leaving, his features expressive of remorse and revulsion at his folly. Keeping in the shadow of the houses, he crosses to the public-house, when he bitterly reproaches himself for his lapse from grace.

The Prostitute, smoking a cigarette, appears on the first-floor landing. Contemptuously she flings her half-smoked cigarette at him. This prize is retrieved by the beggar who smokes it with relish. The Official is alarmed by the beggar's unexpected emergence from the shadows and wonders how much he has seen.

The urchin spy returns and is promptly seized by the Official

who then sees the Stranger coming back, surrounded by a number of children. The Official, enraged at his loss of authority, conceives a fiendish revenge. He sends the boy to the Stranger with a message that the Prostitute begs his presence and help. The Stranger comes forward and climbs the stairs to her room.

The moment the Official has seen the Stranger enter the Prostitute's room, he spreads the news that the Stranger is merely as other men and ready to succumb to the same temptations by which they are beset. The crowd, resentful of this behaviour on the part of one they regarded as a saint, call to the Stranger to come down. The Girl in Black tries to stop some men who wish to attack the Stranger, but she is roughly thrown aside and staggers towards the public-house, when the beggar alone comes to her aid.

Again the door of the Prostitute's room swings open, and in the flood of light the Stranger is seen emerging and descending the stairs. As he comes into the street, the Official peremptorily orders him to leave. As he obeys, the wretched leader of the boys spits in his face, while the crowd jeer in derision then gradually depart.

The Prostitute, her gaudy dress hidden beneath a black shawl, comes out of her room and walks down into the street. Her features are rapt and transfigured, as if at the revelation of some divine truth. The Official observes this change with conflicting wonder and fury. He is approached by a gang of roughs. They plot the Stranger's death and take up agreed positions in the shadowed doorways to await his return. Finally, the Official, as though to ensure that there shall be no witness to the contemplated crime, nudges the urchin spy who puts out the street lamp with a well-aimed stone.

When the Stranger again enters the street the roughs stealthily sidle towards him and surround their victim. From their caps they whip out concealed razor-blades and mercilessly slash at his face and at the bare chest gleaming through his torn shirt. In a frenzy of rage these murderous hooligans pull the

Stranger backwards and forwards, dragging their razors across his chest and back and occasionally kicking him in the stomach. The Stranger's face is contorted with searing agony and his body convulsed with the intensity of pain, until the leader of the gang deals the final blow by slashing his throat. The long-drawn shriek of a ship's siren is heard and the gang hurriedly decamp, leaving the Official alone, exulting at the elimination of his rival, as he slowly withdraws from the scene of his crime.

The beggar comes forward, gently raises the Stranger's head, and gazes in horror at his terrible wounds. He is joined by the Prostitute and by the Girl in Black. The Prostitute takes her companion's neckerchief and hands it to the beggar, who reverently covers the Stranger's face, as the two women walk slowly and sadly away until they pass from sight.



This ballet aroused considerable interest coupled with a measure of outcry when first performed, due rather to the subject than its novelty of treatment. The piece is part sociological tract, part morality play, rendered in terms of mime varied with dance. The underlying idea is: "What would happen if God returned to earth and visited a modern city?" It is not a new theme in either drama or literature, but it is certainly a new subject for ballet.

The production doubtless stems from Jooss's *Big City*, to which it bears the same relation as a completed drawing to a sketch for a few details. It was a mistake on Captain Benthall's part to name a particular district as the scene of the presumed visitation, thus arousing the wrath of the local authorities, when a description such as "a working-class district in a modern industrial city" would have served equally well, since such surroundings and conditions are not confined to Clydeside.

What of the theme? The Stranger's raising of the dead girl to life; the acclaiming of the Stranger; his betrayal by the Official; the sickening murder of the Stranger; and the

tending of his dead body by the two women; are all episodes from the story of the Crucifixion, expressed in terms of contemporary life. The theme of the Official's yielding to temptation to spite his moral principles may possibly owe something to the unexpected behaviour of missionary Davidson in Somerset Maugham's short story called "Rain." Similarly, the razor-slashing dock-hands are reminiscent of Pinkie's associates in Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock*.

The setting by Burra is a starkly realistic presentation of a district near Clydeside. The costumes, by the same artist, are typical examples of working-class attire. The factory-girls chewing gum; the dock-labourers in trousers and jerseys; the prostitute; the beggar; the street-urchins—might all have walked straight from the streets on to the stage.

I cannot help thinking that Helpmann has gone astray in his realistic treatment of so much of the theme. He has reproduced low life with uncanny accuracy. But this is surely the business of the producer of a stage play. Indeed a good part of the *effect* of this work could be achieved by any competent producer. The art of ballet is first and foremost an appeal to the imagination. It is the business of the choreographer to transmute reality, to hint at or suggest what he desires to convey, not to reproduce it with photographic fidelity to nature.

The role of the Suicide suffers from the fact that we are afforded no clue as to why she should wish to take her life. She seems to be forced into the piece simply to provide an opportunity for the Stranger to work his "miracle." The Reel Step with which she expresses her joy at being restored to life seems unrelated to the realistic scheme. She might conceivably offer up a prayer of thanksgiving; she might hurry to the public-house for a glass of brandy; but there seems no valid reason why she should emulate the example of the Tumbler in "The Legend of Barnaby."

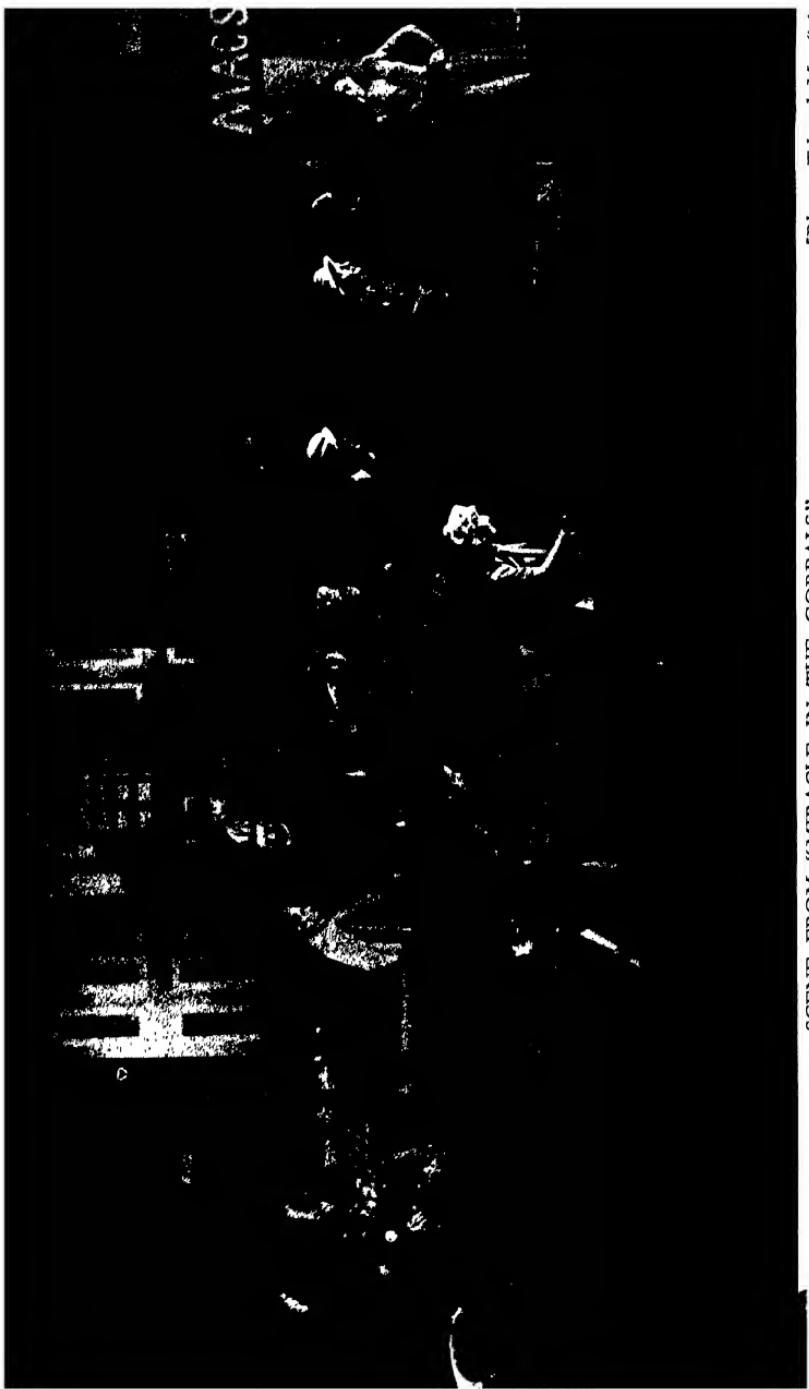
The majority of the roles present little difficulty to the trained dancer-mime, for she has only to copy what can be seen in certain streets in any city. The one important role,

which dominates the entire work, is that of the Official, which psychologically is most interesting, and well interpreted by David Paltenghi, with a real appreciation of the varied and often complex situations contrived by Helpmann. The role of the Stranger is not particularly arresting, except in the scene of the murder which is rendered with terrifying realism.

The chief merit of this production is Bliss's music which informs and guides the ballet from first to last. It has all the unrest and discord which are part of the blessings of modern civilisation, and drama and passion are superbly depicted in the scene where the crowd is swayed by religious hysteria to become slaves of a jungle rhythm thumped out by horny hands on a nearby drum, and again in the final scene of murder where one can almost feel the blades cutting into flesh and hear the agonized breathing of a helpless man being tortured to death.

Miracle in the Gorbals is a striking spectacle, but it is a work for the legitimate stage rather than the ballet stage, notwithstanding that the miming and dances are fitted most carefully to the music. The production is in the Jooss manner with the occasional use of ballet movements such as those assigned to the lovers. It must be observed that the introduction of such flowing gestures strikes a note of incongruity. The swaying of the crowd as a complete unit while watching the recovery of the Suicide's body is reminiscent of the crowd reaction during the duel in Lichine's *Francesca da Rimini*.

Interesting as this production is in many ways, it is questionable whether such themes are suited to translation in terms of ballet, and whether this is not one of those occasions when the desire to achieve a sensational work has not overruled a proper sense of the fitness of things.



SCENE FROM "MIRACLE IN THE GORBALS"

[Photo: Edward Mantinia]



SCENE FROM "THE SPIDER'S BANQUET"

[Photo: Edward Mandina]

BALLET BY ANDREE HOWARD

THE SPIDER'S BANQUET¹

Ballet in 1 Act.

Book: Gilbert de Voisins.

Music: Albert Roussel.

Scenery and costumes: Michael Ayrton.

Choreography: Andrée Howard.

First produced: New Theatre, London, June 20th, 1944.

CHARACTERS

The Spider	.	.	.	Celia Franca
Ants	.	.	.	Joan Sheldon, Jill Gregory, Anne Negus, Guinevere Parry, Elizabeth Kennedy, Joan Valerie, Avril Navarre, Gillian Lynne
Beetles	.	.	.	Rosemary Lindsay
			.	Paula Dunning
The Butterfly	.	.	.	Moira Shearer
Grubs	.	.	.	Mavis Jackson
			.	June Vincent
Praying Mantises	.	.	.	Gordon Hamilton
			.	Ray Powell
The Mayfly	.	.	.	Pauline Clayden
The Dragonfly	.	.	.	Henry Danton

The ballet proper is preceded by an overture which quickly

¹ The original French title is *Le Festin de l'Araignée*.

establishes an appropriate mood for this drama of insect life—a vague murmur which rises and falls in volume, occasionally to be broken by a slight muttering or a faint intermittent hum like that of a tiny spinning-wheel.

The stage curtain rises to reveal a drop-curtain of which at present only a small section on the left is illuminated. It shows a dark grey spider engaged in spinning its web as seen through a naturalist's magnifying glass. The general colouring of the plants which support the web is bluish-green. The scene grows lighter to reveal a background of reddish-brown earth.

The drop-curtain grows dark and rises to reveal the scene proper, at present shrouded in darkness save for the left-hand side of the stage, where a gigantic spider's web stretches from the "flies" to the ground. At the top of the web clings a dark-grey spider with baleful glittering eyes. The stage slowly lightens and it is possible to see a background of plants and earth, while on the right front is a straw-coloured cocoon.

A group of reddish Ants thread their way along the ground towards the cocoon, at the base of which lies a leaf. They try to lift it from the ground but it proves too heavy for the Ants nearest to it. Then each Ant grasps its neighbour and by their united efforts the leaf is raised, supported on their heads, and the prize carried away.

Meanwhile the Spider begins to work on her web. She moves her fore-legs with a circular motion and begins to draw threads from her body. Then she drops to the bottom of the web and strengthens it with fresh threads laid across it. Her preparations complete, she climbs to the top of the web and there, hiding in the shadow, cynically watches the life about her while grimly anticipating the careless flight or false step which will present her with the hoped-for victim.

Two horned Stag-Beetles, their wing-cases gleaming with a metallic greenish lustre, lumber along the path. They fight clumsily until one is hurled to the ground, where, lying on its back, it feebly agitates its legs in endeavour to rise. At

last it is helped up by the Ants who have returned and together with its companion lurches away out of sight.

The Ants return. Then comes a newcomer—a yellow Butterfly adorned with flecks of black and blue, who gaily flutters her wings and flits and whirls to and fro. Now and again she approaches the web, into which the spider tries to inveigle her, but always she darts away. At last, the Butterfly, courting danger once too often, catches the tip of a wing against a sticky thread. Overcome with fear, she collapses to the ground and feebly flutters her wings. Swiftly the Spider drops to the bottom of the web, approaches the Butterfly and binds her with those deadly threads. Then she drags her to the interior of the web. Her supper secured, the Spider rolls on the ground in an ecstasy of anticipation, then carries her helpless captive away into the shadow.

A black spherical object—a rotten plum or apple—drops from an unseen branch to the ground. Two white Grubs, crawling one over the other, make their way with a strange viscous looping and extension of their flexible bodies towards the rotten fruit, which they enter.

From the left come two Praying Mantises, fearsome creatures with green bodies, enormous emerald eyes, and long mandibles strangely bent in an attitude of prayer. They dart to and fro, extending their saw-like mandibles in a warlike posture. The Spider returns and drives them against the web, where they, too, are caught by the fatal threads. Darkness falls.

A ray of light falls upon the cocoon which is agitated from within. Suddenly the topmost band is burst open and it is possible to see the lively countenance of a Mayfly, who gazes for the first time on a strange and exciting world. Eager to try her newly-acquired wings, she struggles furiously and one by one bursts her bonds until at last she is free. How pretty she is, this tiny winged creature with her delicate blue-tinted body! How happily she spreads her wings and flits from plant to plant! Presently she is joined by a Dragonfly, and together they sport and frolic until her partner whirls

THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

from sight. The Mayfly alights for a moment and spies the web, from which she retreats in terror.

The two Beetles lumber across from one side of the glade to the other. The Ants return and take up their positions about the clearing, waiting expectantly for the Mayfly to die. The two Grubs crawl out of their fruit and indulge in a curious dance, squirming one over the other, rolling over and over, now together, now separated. The Mayfly flits happily from one to the other. All at once she stops, falters, her wings seem strangely heavy. She feels suddenly faint and falls dead. Her brief hour of life has sped its course. The Grubs approach the Mayfly but crawl away as the Spider creeps quickly upon this toothsome morsel.

While the Spider is engaged in preparing the Mayfly for removal to the web, the Mantises succeed in freeing themselves from those fateful threads. Stealthily they approach the Spider, their saw-like mandibles extended in posture of attack. The Spider, suddenly aware of their menace, turns to meet them, but already her slender waist is caught between the jagged teeth of those terrible rending jaws. The Spider falls, crawls painfully towards her web, then dies, her contorted legs drawn close to her body so that she resembles a ball of down.

The Ants go to the Mayfly, lift her up tenderly and carry her away. The two Beetles lumber in their wake. The Grubs squirm over the Spider then slowly crawl to their home. As darkness falls, the Mantises move jerkily from sight, their plume-like antennæ erect, their mandibles bent in a curious prayer-like attitude, so that their grim shadowy silhouettes suggest savage jungle warriors returning from a raid. The curtain slowly falls.



Here an earlier ballet has undergone a metamorphosis and become a different work, as a result of fitting new choreography to the existing music and theme. The original "book" was devised by Gilbert de Voisins, a descendant of the great

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Taglioni, who it will be remembered married the Comte de Voisins. In 1912, Jacques Rouché, then director of the Théâtre des Arts, Paris, invited a promising young composer called Roussel, to provide a score for the de Voisins script. The commission was accepted, the score completed at the end of the year, and the ballet successfully produced, with choreography by Leo Staats, at the "Arts" on April 2nd, 1913.

When Andrée Howard was invited to arrange a ballet for the "Wells," she had no particular theme in mind. Happening to hear a concert performance of Roussel's *Le Festin de l'Araignée*, she was attracted by the rhythm of the music, which corresponded to the type of movement she wished to use. But when she studied the synopsis of that ballet, it did not entirely satisfy her and she wished to alter certain details. She decided to consult the late Edwin Evans, who advised against her plan, on the ground that the theme was too well known.

The setting and costumes by Michael Ayrton suffer from being presented realistically rather than imaginatively. Indeed, the costumes for many of the characters are reminiscent of late 19th century fashions at the Empire Theatre.

I do not know whether Miss Howard is a student of Fabre, but if not, she has certainly used her powers of observation to good purpose. Unfortunately, the dance invention is gravely restricted by the very nature of the characters, Spiders, ants, beetles, and grubs creep and crawl, but they do not dance, and it is difficult to imagine their doing so. This means that only the Butterfly, the Mayfly, and the Dragonfly may conceivably dance, and thus the other characters must become mimes or be reduced to the function of living properties. Since the interest of the piece cannot be founded on dance, an attempt might have been made to add to the scope of the "difficult" characters by investing them with an element of humour, but Miss Howard has chosen to treat the theme in a mood of almost scientific detachment.

The piece becomes a grim picture of the tragedy of everyday

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life in the insect world, where death in many horrid forms lurks beneath every twig, leaf, and blade of grass. Miss Howard's composition has caught the atmosphere of this Lilliputian realm with her ingeniously contrived moments of drama mingled with little scenes of intense pathos for those who look beyond the purely visual aspect, but there are other times when the action inevitably flags for the reasons already given. One of the most unusual and imaginative "numbers" is that for the two grubs.

